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THE UNDERWORLD  
OF INDIA

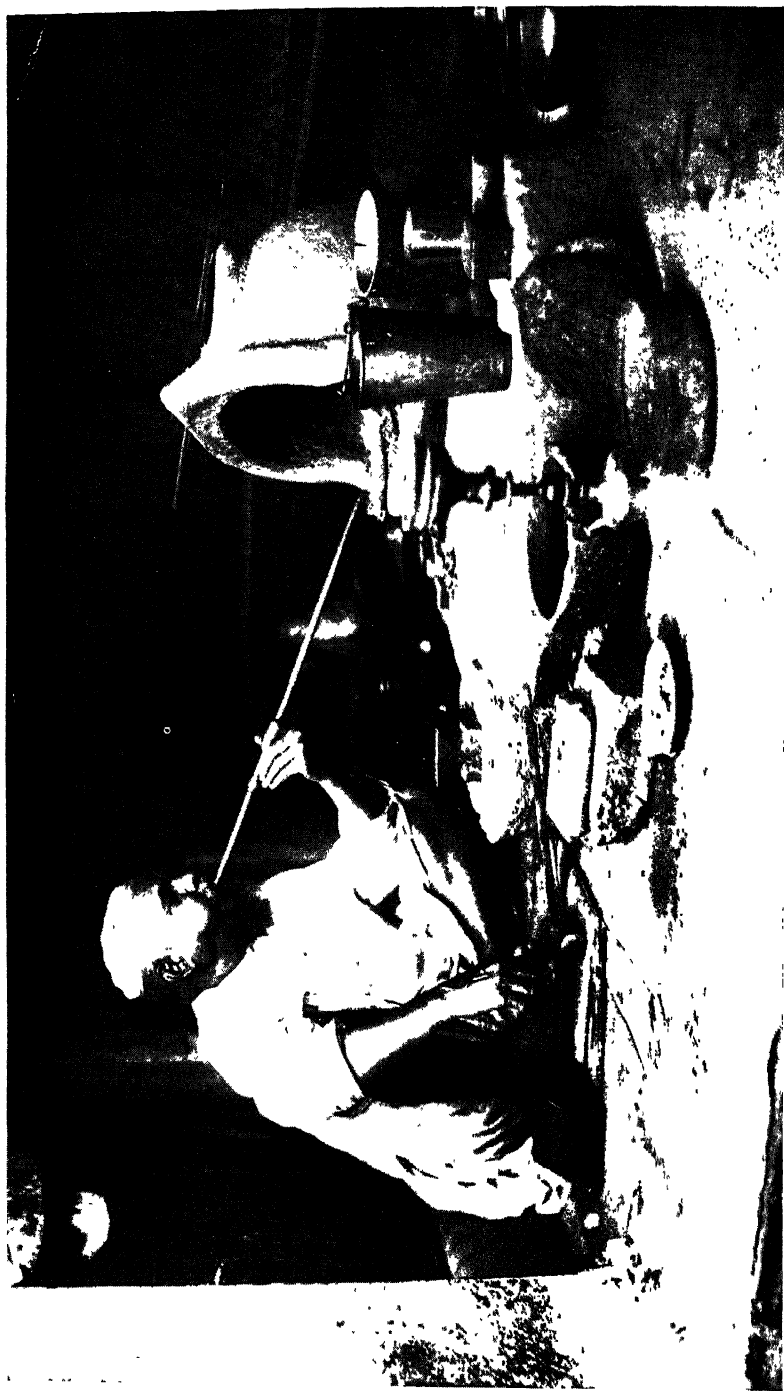


*By the Same Author*

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"THE FINING POT FOR SILVER AND THE FURNACE FOR GOLD"

The Sonar or goldsmith, who despite the value of his materials, belongs in many parts to the low caste Hindus of non-Aryan origin

THE GOLDSMITH

*Frontispiece*]

# THE UNDERWORLD OF INDIA

By  
Lieut.-General  
Sir George MacMunn  
K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O.

FOURTH IMPRESSION

JARROLD'S *Publishers* LONDON  
*Limited 34 Paternoster Row E.C.4*  
MCMXXXIII

**XXXXXXXXXX**

**MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
AT GAINSBOROUGH PRESS, ST. ALBANS  
BY FISHER, KNIGHT AND CO., LTD**

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## INTRODUCTION

IN writing this short story of some of the stranger and less western aspects of every-day life in India, I did not do so in the wish to cast aspersions on any of the side-walks of life nor on the people of India. There is never a crime nor a perversion nor a curiosity of Eastern life for which some corresponding parallel might not be found in the strange corners of the West. I rather write to tell people of the stranger side of human nature, into which it has always interested me to inquire and to give some more perspective to the conception of Indian variety and magnitude. Off the main track of ghosts and *jinn*s, and *churels* haunt the villager, pilgrims and ascetics lead a life far from the crowd, while on the festivals come women and worshipping dancing and drums, and most of the folk who do it are outcaste of all that the Brahmins and high-caste folk stand for. The snake charmers and the conjurors, the *shikaris* and the elephant men, and the sonsy girls in skirt and brassière, with the glancing mutinous eyes, they are the fun and interest of underside India. I have used the word underworld for every sort of half understood thing and people in the two aspects of the East.

“Out from the East two mystic voices call,  
One says . . . the way is short the shadows fall  
Beauty and love all worldly joys resign  
Bind not thy soul with pleasure ; God is all.

“Another speaks . . . trust not the unseen power  
Life’s path soon ends, so pluck the wayside flower  
Joy is a gift to-day the world is bright,  
None knows the morrow, take the fleeting hour.”

LYALL



# THE UNDERWORLD OF INDIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE PATHOS OF UNDERWORLDS

THE SUBMERGED TENTH—THE INDIAN UNDER-  
WORLD—CASTE—THE UNTOUCHABLES—AMERI-  
CAN AND EUROPEAN COLOUR PREJUDICE—THE  
LACRYMÆ RERUM—KINDLY EUPHEMY

#### THE SUBMERGED TENTH

UNDERWORLDS of any age and any continent are the most pathetic, the most fascinating, and the most abstruse of studies. They have many different facets, economic, criminal, religious and racial, and each touches often enough the very acme of tragedy and *lacrimæ rerum*.

Not for a moment must it be assumed that under-worlds are entirely and necessarily underworlds of crime. They derive from many causes far back in the mists of time, as witness our own gypsies who came perhaps marching as a tribe of weapon-sharpeners and tent pitchers behind Hun and Mongol forces. Thus, the Chapparbands in India from time immemorial have marched from none know where in the wake of the Moguls, building from the marsh grass of the great rivers the huts for the army. Here in Britain of but forty million souls even, is there an underworld due to countless causes, descendants perhaps of slave folk to

Roman and Saxon, of pimps and pandars to the Norman armies, peasants crowded out from decent life perhaps, by the failure to foresee and foreplan that marked our own industrial development, complicated by the foreign influx of the lesser breeds, or from earlier migrants driven from village and town by the Black Death—who knows where the dust and the underworld were born?

Perhaps of all causes, that most potent is the drive that took men to the sea in ships, and the lawless population derived therefrom, which first grew to minister to nautical needs and passions in Cretan and Phœnician days . . . let us say too, in the still Phœnician and almost independent port of Marseilles. Port Said, till the Anglo-Egyptian Police got their grip on it in very recent times, combined all the evils that have come through the ages since Alexandria became a world emporium. It was Francis Bacon who said that "Perils demand to be paid by pleasure" the questionable excitements of drink and courtesan. As you travel round the globe in your comfortable liner, you may perhaps muse on what Anglo-Chinese miscegenation at Cardiff may forebode, and what manner of men be the bleary-eyed gnomes who coal your ship at Suez, or the Balkan girls who work for their dowries as courtesans at Port Said, the "have a dive" boys at Aden, and the Chinatowns of the world by which your liner glides.

#### THE INDIAN UNDERWORLD

If the forty millions of Britain alone contains an underworld that baffles police, borough councils and clergy, what then must the great continent of India with its 350 millions not present in the same aspect. Here is not only a *mélange* of races and religions, but a series of submerged empires of which the peaks are

still above the water, and over all, the astounding tyranny of a religious system which was older when Christ came to the world than Christianity is now.

To write in one book of the underworld of Europe, a continent which, if Russia be omitted, is about parallel to India in size and population, would be manifestly absurd. Nor would it ever be necessary, since the European continent is made up of many states not correlated one with another. It is almost as absurd in point of size and numbers to attempt the same for India, but it is justifiable in that that continent has been rebuilt by ourselves, and has been controlled as one. Many of us have more than a bowing acquaintance with many parts of the country, and have been concerned in the matter both of duty and of interest in burrowing deep into the problems of the races and underworld.

Further, since the great Indian problem is indissolubly married to Britannia, it is but right that some few vistas of this side of Indian life should be presented as on a screen to the public of this land. Further, it is not too much to say that it is a problem in which only Britons are seriously interested. Does, with perhaps here and there a remarkable exception, the normal high caste Hindu care one jot or one tittle for the sixty millions of untouchables, the ten millions of aboriginals, and all the strange fragments that make country and city life so difficult a problem for the police? Few indeed are the Indians for whom such scum and foam on the shore existed, until in the political world came there possible power in a ballot-box.

All those that are poor and oppressed, even of the higher classes, have few advocates, and to the comfortables the underworld has but existed for their helot uses. Now and again some reformer through the ages has thought of that. Sikhism claims all men equal, as does Islam, but both in India have imbibed much of the

caste intolerance animating the races whence they sprung.

In trying then to see something of this strange underworld so complicated by an age-long religious system, we shall see the village and city servants and scavengers, who once perhaps were princes in their own right, see them cringe in fear of offending their Aryan conquerors and betters, and see also these tribes referred to who have followed for centuries the world armies and are gypsy and vagabond for all time. We shall see the outcaste races of *Mhars* and *Doms* and their equivalents distributed by enslavement throughout their villages as servants, menials and scavengers, to the binding of whom a religious spell has been woven so abstruse that none can fathom it, and so effective that none can break it. We shall see the cities where the camp followers of the moving worlds stayed to continue for ever their mean and sordid panderings, and we shall see clustered openly such vices and sexual perversions as even the curious West has hardly dreamed of. We shall see also the great framework of normal prostitution, the latticed balconies and the "houses on the wall" recognized and orderly, providing dancing and light amusement for peoples that have no social amusement elsewhere. They offer with the rose-water *huka* a salon of gossip, as well as a more intimate companionship in the velvet cushioned interiors . . . those intriguing darkened *anderuns*<sup>1</sup> in which musk and atta almost stifle the languid notes of the guitar.

There march before us stumpless lepers for whom the world cares nothing and whose lives are forged on anvils hot with pain, the beggars with their bowls to receive the cowries of the kindly, the religious mendicants of a dozen different orders, each more loathely and lowly and perhaps more instructive than the other.

---

<sup>1</sup> Persian—secluded interiors.

Amid the stress, in ancient gardens recluses sit and meditate as did the Buddha many a century ago, on this world of grief and woe. Out in the village life, children are murdered for their bangles, armed dacoits plan to fill old ladies with kerosene to divulge their hordes, "bangles ring softly and sadly", and all the while the police of India struggle against such a tissue of strange crime, false evidence, and at times feeble judges as would turn western police grey to even dream of.

Such in very brief are the suggestions that the words "Indian Underworld" must bring to the minds of those who have even but a bowing acquaintance with East-of-Suez.

#### CASTE

There has been so much written about India of late that such subjects as caste, untouchables, high caste, and the like, are familiar enough to many of the everyday public, but it is not possible to treat of this mysterious layer unless a few words on the matter be said here. Caste is the warp and woof of all Aryan India that has embraced or remains under the social system evolved after the slow over-running of India by a white race. Under that system every form of social life and occupation received a recognized place, high or low, and such places were stamped and sealed by religious laws. What feudalism engaged to do in the West, caste did in India.

Caste is the essential part of every Hindu's personal make-up, and the one thing about him that he knows to be all-essential to him in this life and the lives that are to follow. It is sometimes said that caste is breaking down under the pressure of westernism, but those who have a deeper knowledge of the subject feel that it is not caste, but only the more irksome and less essential routine thereof that may be falling to the ground.



an Indian has recently written : "Whether caste is good or bad is not yet out of the region of controversy, and whether it is more alive than dead or more dead than alive."

Nor is opinion at all agreed on as to how caste arose. It is probable that it first came into being as the leaders of the white race, the Aryans who entered India, saw the dangers which a widespread miscegenation was bringing in its train, a swamping of all that was best and worth while in the race. The children of miscegenation were therefore declared outcaste, inferior, beyond the pale, exactly as to this day is the offspring of white and negro, however good, white or rich, even unto the third and fourth generation. Added to these were the aboriginal conquered tribes who came within the settled area, condemned as outcaste and menials all their lives. Starting thus, added to the many inventions of hundreds, nay, thousands of years, we have also the operation of the guild and trades-union spirit which made every trade and business hereditary and habitual. These were welded anew when, after Brahminism had sojourned in the wilderness for the many hundred years that Buddhism swept India, the whole Hindu society was gradually reconstituted by a direction finally wielded from the Rajput centre of Kanauj.

This story of Brahminism, lying, for centuries to rise again, like some dormant fish in a mudpond, is alone one of the most astounding of the wonders of Eastern History, but is in the main outside the scope of this book. It sufficeth to say that it forged anew the fetters of impurity and caste on the non-Aryan races as well as the tyrannies of custom and taboos on the twice born.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Risley thought that railways spread Brahminical influence, and only got rid of the lesser shibboleths that did not matter.—*People of India*.

When we marvel at the force and rigidity of caste we may perhaps realize that it, and perhaps it alone, has kept society in India from entire disintegration during the centuries of conquest and invasion and has preserved Brahminism and its popular derivatives, intact for the last thousand years, despite the onslaught of Islam.

How far below the Aryan caste-man is the Indian underworld, whether born such or expelled from higher planes, will be evident hereafter.

For the sake of marshalling the scene in due perspective, it may be remarked that all modern caste centres round the ancient divisions, which while long overlaid and obscured by innumerable layers almost defying computation, still govern the ultimate problem. Out of the mists of time and during the forming of the white Aryan nomads into a settled people, the original migrants grouped themselves in three : *First* the priestly class, the Brahmins who succeeded in being accepted, and remaining as thrice holy and thrice set-apart ; *secondly*, the Kshatryia class, the soldiers and governors, and their followers as men-at-arms, perhaps the same classes as formed the Cavalier horse ; while the *third* were those traders, cultivators and artisans of higher crafts and the like who were known as the Vaisyas. Outcaste below them were the fourth state, the inferiors of countless grades, termed Sudras, which embraced all those of mixed white and black origin—and by black must be taken Dravidian and aboriginal blood—and those pure black peoples who ventured to come within the picture by purporting to live within the pale of organized and recognized life, giving some faint lip service to Hinduism.

Outside, those who had no "truck" at all with any Hindu ways, would be not even untouchable. To be untouchable you must be within the warp and weft of

Hinduism, however lowly, a brick in a wonderful system, as fraught in many ways with good, as in other directions with evil.

The evil of the system has lain in the trampling below the acceptance level of the whole of the conquered races, and of the half-bred and illegally bred folk of miscegenation. No man knows the origin of the system, probably, or at any rate possibly, as has been said, *designed to keep the white blood pure*, as soon as the adverse results of a generous miscegenation were realized. It has resulted in a quite insurmountable barrier between the twice born and the other races so far as the individual is concerned. It has resulted in the most astounding tyranny and cruelty, as marked to this day in many aspects, as ever it was. It is perfectly true, however, that the warrior classes, when of mixed descent, did apparently secure recognition as twice-born even when not pure Aryan, in the reconstruction of society at Brahmin hands for Brahmin advantages. When Buddhism after its long dominion left the land, apparently only those who could and were prepared to uphold Brahminism by the sword were so admitted. The millions of aboriginal and Dravidian races were always outside. The actual ancient structure and the re-birth of Brahminism after it had lost all to Buddhism will be outlined in the next chapter.

### THE UNTOUCHABLES

The result of this grading, however it arose, shows the mass of the country below and outside the Aryan grades, and among them many millions who are referred to as "untouchables" or "depressed" classes. To be untouchable means that no caste man can be near you, that your children must not enter the schools but gape in the verandas, that any contact with you

demands dire religious penalties on the "*touchee*". Such penalties would include the feeding of Brahmins, so useful a feature of everyday life, and the penal drinking of the flowing bowl that contains the purifying drink of the five physical products of the cow, of which urine and *excreta* are the principal components. "I like urine greatly" as the Rajah says in *An Indian Holiday*.

But the unpleasant penalties that may fall on an untouchable whose carelessness compels the highcaste Hindu to purify himself with the flowing bowl, may be dire. There are always hired bravos who will beat an unfortunate at night within an inch of his life, and any step over the bounds permitted to such would be very cruelly served even in these enlightened days.

But within the great boundaries of low caste there are countless rules and divisions of the people, and many inventions have hedged low caste life by popular wish, and the desire to imitate. To a high caste man it matters not the least what the low caste men may devise for themselves; if they like to imitate, why, that is their business! Similarly, if all and sundry like to practice the rules of life of a religious caste Hindu, why, that is their business too. As low caste men they have a low position in the great Hindu framework that is unalterable. No one much cares what it is except the millions of themselves, and the low caste men form a vast lower framework of Indian life, especially in the south. Below them, however, still are the untouchables, the enslaved aboriginal races and those who for many reasons may have sunk thereto.

In this category come the men of the following hereditary menial categories and occupation, all probably from the widespread outcaste race spoken of generally as the *Dom*, and whose menial branches have long assumed the status of a separate people with rules and laws and uncouth marriage ways of their

own. These are the *Chamars*, the leather workers ; *Churas* and *Dhanaks* who are scavengers ; *Jhinwars*, or water carriers ; from them are the *Bhistis*, the "men of Paradise" who, because water is a cleaner article than nightsoil, have a much better acquired status, and incidentally are among the most trustworthy and desirable of the menials. Nevertheless their outcaste position is quite clear, and ancient, though it is to be noticed that their name is one of beauty. Among the menials are also the *Kumhars*, potters ; *Lohars*, smiths ; *Nais*, barbers ; *Kassabs*, butchers ; *Tarkhans*, carpenters. Of these perhaps the *Churas* and the *Chamars* hold the lowest place. The removal of night soil and scavenging generally would make it so, and the skinning and curing of leather is an equally noisome task in the East. These are the tally of the untouchables.

It is from these that much of the underground world comes, in this strange social system which Brahminism succeeded in fastening on a world that should have been allowed to evolve, rather than to crystallize into forms that are set so ruthlessly. Once a scavenger always a scavenger, and once a leather-worker always a leather-worker. You may perhaps descend in the scale if you break caste rules, or the rules of whatever your profession binds you to, but there is no method of going up as an individual, save one. That one method is force of arms, which is so rare among the depressed.

For this reason now and again there is a tale told and cases known of outcaste men becoming leaders of gangs as ruthless and worthless as themselves, and having acquired dominion, have retained it. Having been acquired, the position has been tolerated, but as a rule everyone's hand would turn against the upstart, so that the world should not be shocked by the rise of one so unworthy. Nevertheless, there are cases in which tribes and classes have steadily managed to improve

their status by adopting over a number of years, the punctilios and taboos of their betters, and finally gaining a move up in popular opinion, while aboriginal chiefs have been known to manufacture for themselves a semi-Rajput position by hiring a Brahmin to invent an ancestry.

In Islam the outcaste case is different. Any outcaste who has turned Moslem has at least the chance derived from his own personal equation, however little enough from the force of outcaste upbringing it may be. Save in Islam, the outcaste races all live content, thrice-bound into the Hindu mesh which is counted so rigidly for all who would be within its fold. Those who are not do not matter. Outcasteness is the price of recognition, be it never so contemptuous, and the fact that these wretched folk should ever have desired it, shows the astounding position that Brahminism had won for itself as the spiritual guardian of the pure white.

#### AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN COLOUR PREJUDICE

Lest we should gird too deeply at so ruthless a dominion, let us turn aside and see how our own Aryan fellows in parts, look at the problem, the problem of their Christian fellow-beings, with the Cross for a sign. What is the position in the United States? Not only are Christian negroes absolutely taboo, but even unto many generations. No man, however magnificent in mind or body, no woman, however beautiful, who have in them, even when not visible, a percentage of negro taint, is admissable. Woe betide them if relying on Mendel's law, and the fact that a white ancestor has set his mark on them, they presume to pose as whites and act accordingly. Let us also remember that Americans still are largely Europe-born constantly recruited from

the British Isles, and that the British-born folk think as strongly as the American born, and we need not wonder at high-caste Hinduism in our own Aryan fellow-folk of India. Not only is this so in the United States. No one in England is allowed to have dark blood without it being constantly spoken of "My dear . . . dark blood, you know" . . . and no marriage into such would be cordially accepted by relatives.

In India among Europeans there is a lurking, if suppressed, dislike entirely wrong-headed but congenital, for mixed marriages and mixed blood, of which the contamination by the true test of nature marriage, is to be shunned. In India of all places is this feeling to be deprecated for we are ourselves responsible for this miscegenation. But so also were the ancient white Aryans who founded caste, and one cannot avoid the feeling that we ourselves are as full of the same prejudice in our veins, a prejudice indeed beyond our compelling.

Another curious phenomenon is that the European in India soon takes on some of the prejudices against low-caste folk. Those who know, or at any rate did know the country, were particular as to their servants and incidentally gaining more influence with, and respect from, Indians who mattered, thereby. Indeed, is it all a strange business ! But it will be seen how apt is such a condition for the forming of a hidden underworld.

Some of us who have wondered at Ireland, have known how strange is the underworld feeling, with the crust of the priesthood between the outer-world and the Firbog and the Iberian; how no wedding nor even poor funeral will take the high road because Cromwell marched thereby, or how none will remember the story of half of the grey ivied ruins that abound.

## THE LACRYMÆ RERUM

When we speak of the Indian underworld however, there is more to it, as in any country of the world, than the refinements of humiliation of the down-trodden. It is proposed to see the depressed class in their humble routine work, the faithful hewers of wood who groot the daily life, oblivious of how they came to be, but very much concerned in their religious place in the world and still more in the problem of bread and butter. Apart from them, and more definitely criminal and outlawed, must be seen the strange remains that are known as the "criminal tribes" who are quite a different matter from the "depressed classes", as different, let us say, as labour in a European city or in the villages would be from the gypsy on the common.

The Underworlds must be taken to include those devious ways of morals and of religious excitements that folk of higher degree break away to, those strange subjugations of mind and body connected with Indian philosophies, the begging friars, the dancer and the courtesan, the temple prostitute male and female, the sodomites and sodomitesses . . . in the Bible meaning of the evils of the lost city . . . all that man unto man has done. To them we must also add the tragedies of the submerged portions of the half-bred race that British and Portuguese, with some lesser assistance from French and Dutch, have let loose in the whirling pool of Indian races. To them must be added also as an underworld marvel, human, grotesque, popular and parasitical, the half million of mendicants of the religious orders—those whose use lies in showing to a workaday world that there is some other point of view besides the comforts of prosperous life, some view that makes men lay for hours on beds of spikes or so hold arms and legs in painful positions that they are thus set for ever. Even



too must the place of those be shown who, being ready and licensed to deputize for Providence and the infertile husband, are so joyously received in village and town, and after them the "Courtesans of the Realm", to use the stately phrase of Mogul days for the "oldest profession in the world". Of such, of all and sundry, are the underworlds made.

### KINDLY EUPHEMY

For all his ruthless treatment of the untouchable the Indian has, in some sense, a kindly outlook. He looks on his treatment of the outcaste, as has been said, as part of the working of *karma*, and the harshness of the world to the unfortunate as but the working of destiny. To mitigate this, he very gracefully uses a super-courteous form of address to the untouchable in his everyday relations. The sweeper or scavenger is always known or addressed as *Mehtar* or "prince" lest his feelings be hurt. If he be a nominal Moslem he is probably addressed as "O *Jemadar* !" a *jemadar* being a high office of state, though used in our army for subalterns. He is also occasionally addressed as *Maharaj* "Oh Great King! Come quickly." The term *Halhal-khor* "he who eats what is lawful" is also applied to the sweeper with no real sense of jest.

The humble inoffensive tailor sitting cross-legged on a veranda is, if a Moslem, always called "*The Khalifah*" or Caliph, "The Successor" to the Prophet, a term of astounding adoration. Nor are these terms in any way used in sarcasm. It is rather a case of euphemy, of using, and thereby avoiding the use of words of ill-omen, the nicest possible name for a nasty or humble role.

The driver of a car or horse-drawn vehicle threading his way through the crowded bazaars of Bombay

sounding his horn or jangling a foot-bell, shouts to all and sundry to get out of his way "*Hey Maharaj*" "Look out, O Great King" as in the case of the sweeper, the word really being the respectful way of addressing a Brahmin, and not the scuttling coolie of the bazaar.

But above all does the term for the water-carrier transcend in beauty and amiable allusiveness. The water-carrier is known as the *Bhisti*, the man of *Behisht* or "Paradise". Down the long hot platforms as the trains draw up in appalling heat of the summer, comes the cry from the parched carriages : "O man of Paradise, bring water !" It is Dives calling to Lazarus. Thus the merciful water-carrier, humblest of the humble, cleanly though his calling be, has this name of beauty and comfort. "O man of Paradise, bring water !" Also be it noted as a matter of interest, that it is not even Paradise but Heaven. "Paradise" or *Fardous*, the Persian word whence the Greek form Paradise, means a hunting-park, an amusement place, heaven no doubt to Persian kings, but "*Bihisht*" is the real thing, Heaven itself, and thus our outcaste, "The limping lump of brick dust Gunga Deen" is called the "Man of Heaven".

For, in many ways, the East is a kindly place, that would not intentionally hurt a man's feelings, however humble. Dogs are a different matter.

## CHAPTER II

# THE OUTCASTE RACES AND THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

THE ANCIENT HINDU STRUCTURE—THE BRAHMIN RECONSTRUCTION—THE DOMS—THE BEDIYA—THE ABORIGINAL RACES—THE SANTALS —  
SWEEPER AND CRUSADER

### THE ANCIENT HINDU STRUCTURE

CASTE and the untouchables have been briefly described in the foregoing chapter, but it is desirable to study a little further this ancient structure and the matter of the outcaste races whose line of demarcation and whose social frontiers are so fiercely prescribed. Without it much of the underworld must remain a mystery. To do this we had best glance again at the whole racial and religious structure of India as it was before the assault of the overpowering drive and onrush of the Islamic Evangel and his following . . . that somewhat grim presentment of the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad as preached by the folk of the desert potholes and the steppes of Central Asia.

In brief outline it may be said that the races of India consisted and consist to this day, of the over-running white Aryan race that flowed into India perhaps two thousand years before Christ, and who still remain in their greatest purity in Hindustan, i.e., the valley of the Ganges and its tributaries. They conquered under almost unknown conditions a people believed to be migrants also, whom we know as Dravidian. But these Dravidians but impinged on a

country full of Turanian and Negritic tribes and peoples whom they too enslaved, but who in parts may have also been dominant and ruling when the Aryans came.

Every low caste and castelet which are now more than legion, have a curious tradition of mixed origin. When a Brahmin united with a woman of another class, a lower variety was formed and sub-divided to the ninth degree of Mendelian and heraldic conception combined in one complicated fabric. In this connection attention should be paid to the doctrine of transmigration and *karma* which is at the basis of the Hindu teaching as regards the construction of the world and human life. The human soul is reborn into such conditions as his previous life has entitled him to, better or worse. Miscegenation may have produced inferior castes, but the soul that occupies the frame thus created, is a lower soul fighting its way up by its good deeds in previous life, or a higher soul that has fallen. Thus in meting out to the low caste and the outcaste the contemptuous and even cruel social treatment that is so often their lot, the Hindu race is but doing its duty in seeing that the penances of ill-doing is rewarded in this world.

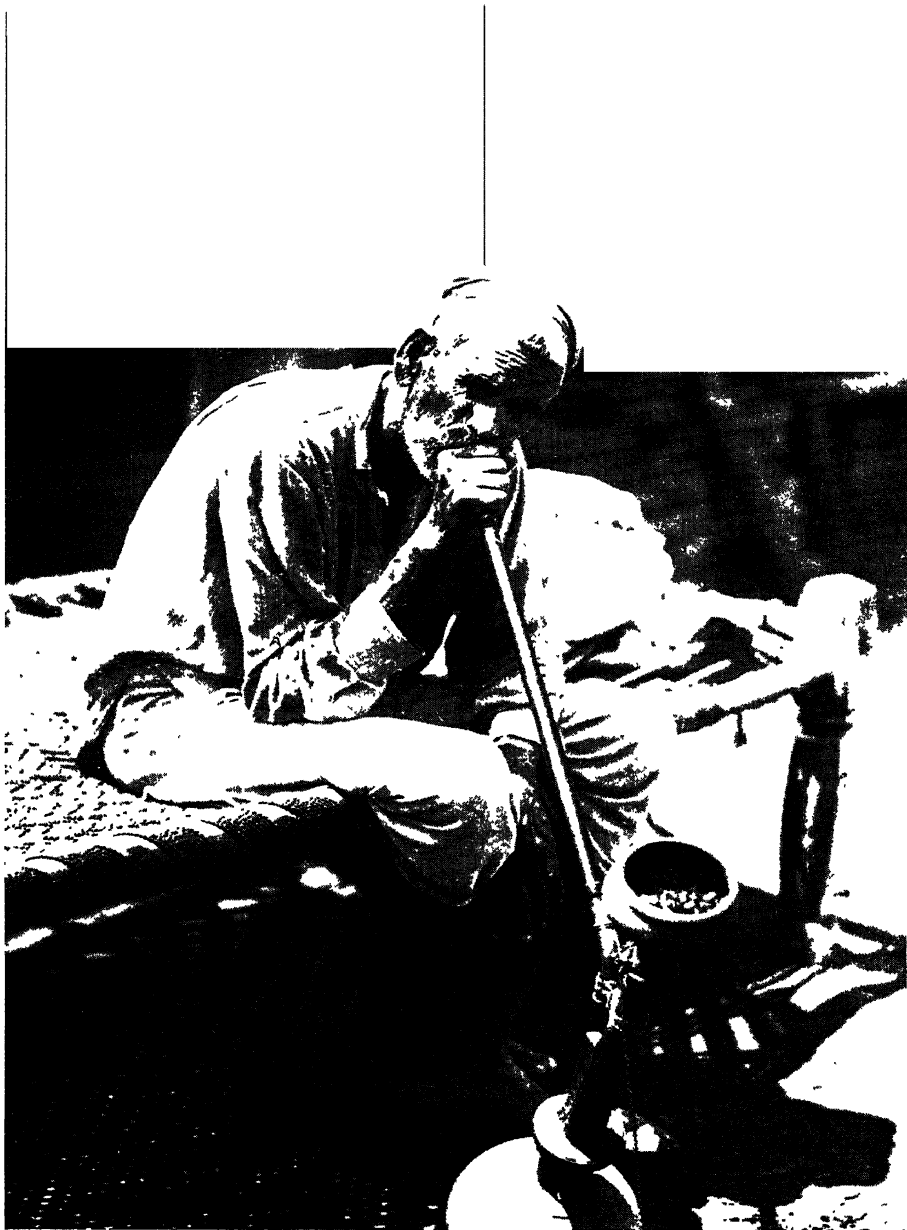
In the case of a soul that has moved up, the social lot among the low caste is better than among the outcaste. Thus it would appear that so long as a man holds by this basic idea of the structure of existence, to take part in the amelioration of the lot of the outcaste and the depressed classes in this life, is to fly definitely in the face of the ordinations of Providence !

The reformers in Hinduism who have preached a more altruistic outlook have not succeeded in altering the mass of public opinion, always excepting the Buddha, and we do not quite know what the position of the depressed classes were in Buddhist days, or

whether it became worse after the great Hindu reconstruction.

It should also be remarked here for the information of those who may not know it, that Hinduism is not the name of a religion, nor do the people whom the world term Hindus use that name for themselves. Hinduism refers to the whole social structure of the people of Ind or Hind, who follow in some form the Brahminical form of teaching and who are tolerated as part of the structure, however humble. This really explains how it is that those who are outside do not matter. Europeans, Animists, Chinese, etc., have never been within the fold or under the umbrella and who cares what weird soul inhabits their earthly shape!

It is to be remembered also that this system which in many ways does provide the most logical, so far as human logic goes, explanation of the world and its strangeness, had become complete and stereotyped some six centuries before the Christian era. And then there arose a great distaste, a great reformation. The Indian world, as it were, coughed up the Hindu presentation of life and truth . . . but it came back to it after many a weary century! Too complex and too deep for human minds had the Brahminical teaching become, without making for the betterment of mankind. There came repletion, and thus arose the Rajput princelet Gautama the *Buddha* or "Enlightener," who preached "The Way," the way that was simple and kindly and understandable of the people, as Christ taught five hundred years and more later. In three hundred years "The Way" had absorbed all the Hindu followers of the many forms of faith that sheltered under the complex umbrella of the Brahmin teaching, and thus the Brahmin priests were driven to live alone and apart for many a hundred year.



THE VILLAGER'S "ELEVENSES"

"And the ploughman settles the share  
More deep in the grudging clod  
For he saith 'The wheat is my care  
And the rest is the will of God'."

*What the people said (R.K.)*

*To face page 32]*



## THE BRAHMIN RECONSTRUCTION

The continent of India as far as the Oxus, developed under the kindly ægis of the Buddhist philosophy during many centuries. But while the Christian era waxed, Buddhism left India much as it had come. It, in its turn, grew complicated, and becoming a religion rather than a teaching, with elaborate ecclesiastics and complicated ceremonies it lost its drive, and Brahminism and its concomitant, the varying faiths of the people of India, revived. Buddhism had gone by the time that Islam came in the eleventh century, and by some strange underground and mysterious method Brahminism had succeeded in rewelding the peoples in a new religious bond of faith and caste. A great caste of chivalry was formed of which the old Kshatryia class formed the nucleus, and on to it clung all non-marital folk each in its place, with a caste system more binding than the old one that the Buddha had driven forth. The ancient frame-work rewelded grew stronger than ever and had strange gifts of development and also of eccentricity. The old white castes remained hedged into their groves and were sub-divided a hundredfold, more exclusive than ever, save that whatsoever community leader or group of warriors would pledge itself to protect and cherish the Brahmin and his network the same should be admitted to a new order of Kshatryia chivalry the "Rajput" race, the "Sons of Princes".

By the year one thousand A.D. all was complete and more than complete, when once again a teacher and a faith—that of the prophet Muhammad—was to render the structure a failure so far as power temporal was concerned. But the infinite variety of cliques, barriers and inhibitions grew stronger, under the conquest and the persecution of the newcomers. To



the new faith also it may be remarked, turned many, for the reasons that had made the peoples follow the Buddha—the demand for a simpler purer way of life. It will always be recorded against Brahmins and their building that they could not make India form front against the Tartar invasions in the earlier days of the Christian era. Neither could they persuade the fierce quarrelling Rajput princes to leave their quarrels and form a fair front against those who emerged with the green crescent banners from out the Afghan Hills. India was lost to them again, and remained so for eight hundred years and then it was to be recreated by the vigorous and kindly British who could rebuild the frame which the Brahmins never made but to break.

Nevertheless, while the Moslems, the professors of Islam, ruled the land, the Hindu pot boiled away and the cliques and barriers were formed more securely. The depressed classes remained depressed, the outcaste folk remained outcaste, those remnants of the old races and the inferior Dravidian peoples. Uplift of a kind did go on. Outcaste folk rose among themselves, menials worked themselves a step higher, people with no pretence to Aryan descent by dint of skill and observance, gained acceptance into the charmed circle, but these were but exceptions to the rule. The great Hindu frame work remained rigid, it had the merit that it secured society in its groves, and maintained the Hindu life virile and vivid despite the Moslem. It, in modern communistic jargon “drugged the people” to be content with their lot. The old conquered races kept their place, performed their humble duties, the framework of life was preserved. The old saying of the Punjab, that has so much practical wisdom, showed the merit of a system which made social revolution impossible. “If you be queen and I be queen who will bang the butter,” contains all

the philosophy of that station in life to which a man may be called. But mark the difference between the rigid Hindu system and the elastic Christian one. Hinduism keeps a man in that state to which he *has been* called. Christianity bids him be faithful in that state to which God "*shall* call him" not "*has* called him". The foolish Communist marks not the supreme difference. With one the uplift rests with the Almighty and man's power to lift himself with God's license. In the other, the Hindu retains him where he is, with rigid hell-threatened barriers. And thus were the depressed classes riveted in their fetters although not always mercilessly so.

With the foregoing outline before us we may now study with a better perspective some of the races and castes that are depressed, and watch them in their everyday life and vocations, and see how far their depression sits on their shoulders. They are quite distinct from the so-called "criminal" tribes.

#### THE DOMS

Among the most widely spread of all the outcaste races are the *Doms*, to whom a brief reference has already been made. Who or what they are no man knoweth but the English who care for these things and who have searched far and wide, opine that they are a race conquered and downed by that pre-Aryan wave of colonizing people who we somewhat vaguely class as Dravidian and whose status modern inquiry and research now show to have had a considerable measure of civilization and dominion. As to who or what were the people they subdued histories are silent, but it seems possible that there may have been pre-Dravidian races remaining in power when the Aryans came down in districts to which the Dravidian had not penetrated.

Whether such were aboriginal and savage or whether they too had a civilization is quite unknown and unimaginable. The name *Dom* is so widely spread that it would almost seem to be a name for a type rather than a name for a people, the name for various tribes for whom Dravidian had a fine contempt. All *Doms*, black of skin though they usually are and primitive of countenance, are not alike, and here and there among them are fairer, i.e., browner sub-divisions that may easily be remnants of some more developed race forced down by events, by crimes, by pestilences, or catastrophic physical happenings.

However that may be, the *Dom* will be found everywhere—north, south, east and west—by hill and in plain, and except for occasion jaunts on burglary intent, he is not one of the criminals. Closely allied with them, another great outcaste tribe the *Chamars*, the leather-workers and carrion-handlers, perform the more miserable functions of and for mankind. Settled in every village, clustered in every city, slum and byre, they are almost without prejudices or niceties and describe themselves as *juta-khais* or *rob-khors*, those who live on other peoples scraps and leavings. In the houses of Europeans where the sweeper, who is one of the black *Doms*, removes the night soil and sweeps the paths, it will be noticed that a pitiful panikin stands outside the door of the dining-room.<sup>1</sup> Into it the contemptuous good-natured servants tip the bones and the scraps from the *sahibs'* plates. This the sweeper carries to his house, and from it, being free of feelings of nicety, he makes for himself a humble outcaste stew. Far more nourishing, however, is his meal than that of the more particular feeders on eastern grains, pulses and *sags*.<sup>2</sup> The sweeper never suffers from the malarias and other complaints of

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIV.

<sup>2</sup> Spinachs and the like.

the Indian servants' hall. He is fed on the same food, though in contemptuous form, as his white master. But it is a strange way of living.

The appearance of the *Dom* varies, but aboriginal of more than one kind he must be. Many are the stories and myths of derivation told by these outcastes themselves. The *Dom* religion is a chaotic survival of animist cults too confused to give clue to origin. In addition to clinging to the outskirts of Hindu worship, they have varying deities and patron saints in different parts of India derived from no one knows what source. Sometimes such priests as they have, are drawn from their own ranks, sometimes from the barbers, and at others they have outcasted and debased Brahmins. The Brahmin regime is strict, and those unfrocked slink away to gain a living as ministrants to some outcaste folk. Where the outcastes have unfrocked Brahmin priests there the rituals and ways of thought tend to rise to the more Hindu forms of belief. Mahadeo, Kali-Ma, and the Ganges receive some worship but the special deities are many. Among them is one Syam Singh, said to be an ancestor of all *Doms* and perhaps a faint memory of the days when they owned land and were a sovereign race. The *Dom* deities, however, are usually depicted by lumps of mud smeared with cow-dung, before which on festival days and marriage feasts pigs are killed and strong drink drunk, a dark miserable business. Now and again when a *Dom* sets out on a thieving expedition he, like the Thug, sacrifices to Kali and slashes himself that his own blood may be a propitious offering.

But apart from occasional criminal intent, the *Dom* is the peaceful not unwilling village and city servant. Scavenging, basket-making, errand-running, carrion-removing, any dog's job that the world in general will not do for itself, is done by the useful

*Dom*. Is it to be wondered at that the ruthless selfishness of the East has combined to keep the *Dom* where he is. No one would dream of a movement of uplift, Gandhi but blathers of the impossible, to humbug Western humanitarians. Rather is it essential to keep the millions of the outcaste in their servile frame of mind, by physical cruelty if need be. Nor is it to be wondered at that the sixty millions of the depressed classes march behind the Union Jack, shout heartily for King George, and generally try to let the world know how they fear a Hinduized temporal power in India, and want the power that always endeavours to improve their lot.

It is true that many reformers in Hindu life have arisen preaching liberty, eternity, equality, fraternity, but ere long, even among Indian Mohammedans to a lesser degree, the ingrained caste prejudices prevail. Baba Nanak who founded Sikhism taught that caste was vain, but the outcaste is not a Sikh save only that brand of sweepers of who, saving the body of a Guru murdered by the Moguls, received the title *Mazbhi* or "faithful" and in some sense are admitted into an inferior branch of that faith. Islam makes all men equal before God, but Indian Moslems are not so sure about it!

In the early days of the British in India some of the outcastes carried the Union Jack in good red-coats, and with rum in their bellies and Brown-Bess on their shoulders gave the "once-over" to the high-caste men who had despised them, as indeed to this day do the pariahs of Madras in the Queen's Own Sappers and Miners. From them, indeed, a new uplifted caste has arisen known as *Quinsap*, the descendants of those who have risen in the world in the Queen's Own Sappers and Miners, as good an example by the way of how caste developed as there is in India.

## THE BEDIYA

Among a large number of the outcaste variants is a big group known as the *Bediya*, and in different provinces by different names. They are pedlars, mountebanks, pimps, pandars, snake charmers, pipers and the like, while their women are reputed to be wise in diseases of children and in rheumatism. They are equally wise as midwives, when women are like those of the Hebrews "quick on the stools" and the more regular midwives are not available, for midwifery is the profession and perquisites of another low caste, and amateurs, however skilful, are not welcome. The trades-union spirit runs more than strong in India in every walk of life. To carry the broom when you are not born to it is an unwarrantable impertinence and a flouting of principle! The branches and sub-castes of this people, aboriginals who have long ago been brought into the Hindu fold, and learned to ape the white religion and accept the ruthless white domination in return for recognition, are numerous. Among them are the *Mir Shikaris*, or hunters, and the *Chirimars*, "bird killers". They hunt and kill the anteater, whose flesh is in great request as a restorer of the lost virility that the early eroticism of India produces, while a piece of its skin, bound round the arm is a sovereign remedy for all the diseases born of venery. The *Mir Shikaris* make a good thing out of this belief and catering therefore. They also purvey the claws and droppings of the spotted owlet or *pencha*, from which a potent love philter is decocted by boiling at night in a small chaldron.

The *Samperia* catch snakes (*samp*) which they do very cleverly, watching them emerge from their holes, and pinning them to the ground with a cleft stick. The jaw is then drawn back, and if venomous the

poison bag is then torn out. It is then sold to Hindu doctors as a remedy and drug that they use in many cures. Among their sources of profit is the strange one that appertains to the *tini*, the peculiar tick that cobras sometimes have on their hood "on their backs to bite 'em" which sells for a considerable sum, and concerning which many fabulous stories are told. It is especially useful in anti-snake bite cures. The peculiar godlet of their devotion is Mansi Devi, whose festival is in July, and the *Samperia* priests of the shrine demand that the *Samperia* produce their snakes and let them crawl before the deity. The *Samperia* not only do snake charming themselves but sell them to more regular charmers, who are themselves a depressed class variant. Another sub-tribe of the *Bediya* are the *Shandars*, who are expert divers and whose women do the trick which is told in the story of Azizun.<sup>1</sup> Their special trade, however, is to make from a reed the fine comb which is used by weavers to disentangle the warp. Another variety of the tribe are the *Rasia Bediyas*, who use queer cocoon shape boats on the lesser tributaries of the Ganges, and who in times of disturbance take to any form of piracy. This was specially the case in the Indian Mutiny and the resultant disorder on the line of that river. They carry on a sub-industry in making zinc anklets, bracelets and collars which are universally worn by both Hindu and Moslem low caste women. Their furnaces are often made of three stones in a tree root, and small hand bellows often worked by the toes bring charcoal to the fiery heat that zinc casting requires.

#### THE ABORIGINAL RACES

Apart from both the "Depressed Classes" and the "Criminal tribes", however, is another big division,

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV. Pp. 86-89.

whose members go to the complication of the Indian problem, and these are the autochthonous pre-Aryan races who have held themselves entirely apart by geographical reasons from Aryan assimilation, and who for the most part hold the variety of unorganized faiths and superstitions which are conveniently included in the term "Animist". They number close on eleven millions, scattered for the most part in the upland jungles of Central India and its radiating plateaux, as *Bhils Gonds Santals*, etc., or in the Himalayan foothills. We have thus the aboriginal and Dravidian folk who have been broken up by the Aryan invasion, and have been driven to the menial and humble roles of life, but who, without any tribal organization, form the "depressed classes" of the peoples aforesaid, and who have evolved themselves for countless reasons, some occupational, into castes and sub-castes innumerable. Then we have the "Criminal" tribes of curious and often gypsy origin equally low in everyone's estimation, but who are, for the most part, of their own choice, within the Hindu umbrella, in that they are recognized as part of the body politic. Then thirdly come this great body of the so-called aboriginal tribes aforesaid of varying stages of development, living in what the Aryans of the old time call "*Jarkhand*", the "region of forest". All or any of these may safely be treated as part of the "Indian Underworld" in that from them from these three sets come all the queer folk, rogues, vagabonds and criminals of every sort and kind.

It is still a matter for discussion as to whether these tribes whose racial characteristics and features vary are Dravidian, pre-Dravidian or part-Dravidian, but it is equally certain that some of them have considerable Mongolian and Negritic blend in their make-up. Others, such as the *Ghond* or *Bandela*, have considerable tradition of sovereignty.



The wild tribes themselves are cultivators and are not scattered as bondservants among the villages of India, as are the *Doms*, *Mhars*, *Bediya*, and *Chamars* aforesaid, and others of the enslaved races who had no jungles in which to escape the grip of the early invaders.

### THE SANTALS

Important among them as a handsome addition to the Indian story and its evolution is one of the larger groups, the *Santals*. The *Santals* are neither a depressed people nor a gypsy tribe, but a very large fairly high-grade people, occupying a hill tract south of the Ganges on the edge of Behar and Orissa, who have practically kept absolutely clear of Hinduism, and they therefore do present to us what is probably a picture of what India was before the Aryan conquest over non-Aryan people. The *Santals* or, as the name was formerly spelt, "*Sonthals*", are what is now called a Kolarian people, a name more or less coined for the occasion. The controversy still wages as to whether the Kolarian races are a Dravidian or a pre-Dravidian folk, and the name is given to the tribes which are largely still animist who inhabit masses of Central India from the lower Ganges across to the Vindhya Mountains in the West. The *Santals* themselves number close on two million folk, and are for the most part non-Hindu. Animism and strange worships of Dravidian gods is their religion, with the exception that various Christian Churches have been carrying a remarkable work of education, conversion, and uplift.

The *Santals* broke out into rebellion in 1856 as the result of agrarian difficulties, oppression by landlords and misunderstanding. It took a large force of the pre-Mutiny Bengal Army to restore order, since when the setting apart of the *Santal* tracts and those

of other tribes to specialized administration has produced remarkable results. But among the *Santals* as among all other of the tribes outside the Hindu umbrella, and outside the areas where Christianity is spreading, there is a tendency to become Hindu, to copy the rules of child marriage and widow remarriage, to put on frills in the Hindu manner as a step towards what seemed to them civilization and advancement.

As the years roll by, there is progress in Hinduization. They began to be held in higher repute among Hindus, and it is this movement which has gradually been in progress in India for perhaps three thousand years among them. The old processes of the pre-Buddhist period is thus going on before our eyes, and increase when the tribe, as referred to elsewhere, gets holds of a degraded Brahmin priest to teach it Hindu ways. The priest-Brahmin, anxious to retrieve his past or magnify his own office, gets very busy, and before many years are past succeeds in getting a name for his flock in Hindu circles. Among the *Santals*, however, there are over a quarter of a million Christians.

The *Santal* and indeed the Kolarian generally, is a round-headed short-nosed individual and his language is agglutinative of the same stock as *Turki* and *Jagatai*. In this case it differs from the Dravidian tongues which even if *Turki* in origin is now considerably inflected. Any measure of Hinduizing that may come upon these tribes is only of course comparative, but its present incidence is heightened by the loom of the ballot box. Nominal Hindu is what Brahminism is ready to make all India, while the fact that many of the aboriginal tribes are inclining to Islam, but stimulates the high caste Hindu to be easier in his terms of acceptance. It is not too much to say that did British bayonets hold the land for them, Hinduism and Brahminism well directed might turn

all India save the 70 million Moslems and perhaps the Sikhs, into reasonably enthusiastic Hindus. It is even possible that the mass movement towards Christianity in the South might be arrested by a liberal Hinduization, as distinct from the grudging and contemptuous recognition of the past. That the Brahmins could do anything useful with it when they got it is another matter, and all history screams at them, *failure ! failure ! failure !*

#### SWEEPER AND CRUSADER

Among many of the pitiful little stories of outcaste life that come to notice of those who care for such things is one that strikes a mingled vein of sorrow and glory. There died in France a sweeper who had come with the Army from India, a road sweeper and latrine scavenger, and he happened to fall sick of a fever. They were kindly folk in the hospitals, and they wrapped him up in many blankets and sent the shivering soul to Merry England that first autumn of the World War. And in a hospital in the New Forest, Sweeper Bigha died. Now it happens that most sweepers are burned, but this was a *Lalbeghi*, a nominal Moslem—very nominal since Indian Moslems have the caste feeling deep behind the brotherhood that should animate Islam—and burial was his lot and right, that he too might face the recording angels like any other follower of the prophet. Now it had been arranged with the *Imaam* in England that he should bury in the Islamic cemetery all Moslems who died in English hospitals. But he was d——d if he would have outcaste Bigha in his holy cleanly plot. And the hospital said what about it? for the other sweepers attached thereto were insistent that he must be buried. Then the vicar of the English Church hard by, heard

of the dilemma, and he said : "Surely Bigha Khan has died for England, I will bury him in the churchyard." And he did so, and so Bigha, outcaste *Lalbeghi*, lies close to a crusader's tomb, in the churchyard of St. Agnes Without, as one who had given as much as the greatest of those who died that the right should live. Those who moralize on ends and happenings may well wonder, and think of the strange bed-fellows of the consecrated burial ground, *Lalbeghi* and Norman, the *alpha* and the *omega* of social status.

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## CHAPTER III

### CONCERNING WOMAN IN THE EAST

WOMEN IN INDIA—MARRIAGE IN THE EAST—  
THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF CHILD MARRIAGE  
—WIDOWHOOD, SATI, AND THE FUNERAL PYRE  
—THE CHOUHAN QUEEN SUNJOTA OF DELHI—  
POLYGAMY, POLYGINNY, POLYANDRY—MAR-  
RIAGE TO INDIA—THE INTIMACIES OF MARRIAGE  
—THE AMENITIES OF SOCIAL LIFE

#### WOMEN IN INDIA

AS so much of the underground life of a nation and a people is connected with sex, the status and outlook of woman, it is necessary before turning to what is one of the subjects proper to this book, viz., that of dancing girls and “women of the town”, to make some remarks on the life of the admirable always to be respected and admired Indian woman is needed. The conditions of abnormal sex life have so much to do with the factors involved in everyday life, that one cannot be followed and understood without some vision of the other.

The commonplace must be repeated here, however, as protection against exception, that India is a country of 350 million people of many races and many religions, and many gradations of religion, and what is true of one race and part is not true in another. Since in all countries religion takes a large part in conducting the normal sex relations, guarding as it were the day-springs of life, it is only but to be expected that the Indian religions should be specially explicit in this



AT THE VILLAGE WELL. (A Biblical scene)



THE GLEANERS  
The admirable women of India



matter. All the world over, those who gird at priestly or religious taboos and restraints complain that the priesthood have got hold of the one thing that affects everyone, and have fortified their own position a thousandfold, by the religious sanctions and inhibitions that they have allowed to gather round the honourable sex relationship. That, however, is only another form of girding at the unalterable. There is no getting away from the fact that nature has given into the hands of every boy and girl lying in the grass the power not only to summon another human being into the world, but to demand of the Almighty a new soul. It is therefore small wonder that from earliest days, mankind, however mistily, has endeavoured to safeguard this power, to control and sanctify the mainspring of eternal life. In Western lands no avoiding the religious side of marriage by civil contract touches the fringe of the matter, which is untouchable and inaccessible. Marriage must be a sacrament and a mystery and even when frivolously entreated and regarded. Hence the priestly rules that but emphasize and make more patent those which the Creator of the World, however it has been evolved, has ordained.

With these general remarks we may turn in very broad outline to the main factors that govern woman's life in India, but only as a prelude to studying the abnormal sex-life and the evil, and as in everything else the modicum of good, that appertains to life in "The House on the Wall". Another Eastern way of life may be mentioned as it acts in the opposite direction one of the Western reasons often given as an excuse for extra-marital license. In the East, among most classes there is no period of seclusion for the marriage chamber. Now that many European women in America and also from England marry Indians (there are said to be a hundred such in Lahore alone) the clash of



niceties is a cause of domestic disagreement, so many are the difficulties of mingling too intimately the ways of East and West (dealt with later under another subsection).

### MARRIAGE IN THE EAST

As there are two main divisions of religion, that of the old social system which outsiders call Hinduism, and that of the incoming Islam, so there are two divisions of thought. But Hinduism is the life and custom of the people of India, by thousands of years established, while Islam is a later comer even than Christianity, and except in the districts exclusively colonized from the North, it has only impinged, despite actual conversion, on adamant custom and usage. There is, of course, the Moslem side of marriage and it is distinct from that of the Hindu, and the low caste untouchable and criminally tribe side, but the Hindu outlook tinges much of the customs of those even faintly beneath its umbrella, who make any claim to respectability. In India in all marriage problems and customs, there is one commanding factor, viz., that it is the stern duty of every parent to see that his daughter be married into a suitable position in life. It may be said that there are no unmarried women of marriageable age in the whole of India . . . such exceptions as there are being so trivial, as not to count.<sup>1</sup> Not only are there no unmarried women but there are few unmarried men, though there may be plenty of widowers. The exceptions to this rule are rather more than in the case of women, but it is equally the paramount duty of parents to marry their sons.

There is an old saying that "the tribe of Flynn's

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<sup>1</sup> This would also refer to marriageable girls of castes that marry when adults.



THE POTTER'S WHEEL (KUMHAR)



THE CHAMAR  
who handles the impure leather  
UNTOUCHABLES

*To face page 24]*



know their own whisky skins," and perhaps India knows all about women of the East. At any rate, in the Hindu rule of life women must be married before they come to the age of puberty lest worse befall. The deep-rooted theory, nay perhaps the deep-rooted knowledge, is that the stirring of the great day-springs, the urge of eternal life, so well expressed colloquially in the French saying, *les enfants poussent toujours*, does need this safeguard against the wrong turning. This period of anxiety in the times of adolescence is known to all parents in all countries, for the same urge is to be found throughout the world and in both sexes. But however new laws and shoutings may endeavour to place sex morality on an equality, all the world knows that the two problems by the mere fact of the case are not the same and nothing can make them so. The guarding of the shrine is more essential than the guarding of the pilgrim. Certainly it is the object of all religions, all civilizations, all governments and all communities, to protect their peoples by rules, inhibitions, etc., from the mishandling of the day-springs. Every community and every religion knows either clearly or mistily, that Nature has given the power aforesaid to boy and girl to summon into the world not only a new body but a new soul, and they endeavour to take due regard thereof.

The Indian method of thought has tried to secure this aim not only by marrying the girls before puberty but also to consummate as immediately as may be at puberty, and also to handfast boy and girl when children. Behind the idea lies the conception that the union between man and woman is lifelong, that it is but dissoluble by death, and that the sooner it begins the better for the world and the race. Wrapt up in this too, lie the ethics of that terrible rite of *Sati*, the burning of the living "devote" widow with her

husband's corpse on the pyre. It is part of the indissolubility of the bond.

To understand the Indian mind on this matter, it is essential to realize that everything to do with generation, fertility and procreation, is very properly at all times closely related to religion. In every temple the organs of generation, intertwined and interwoven, of man and beast are common objects. Some are almost conventional and allegorical, some are, to Western minds, impossibly gross and indecent, as indeed are some of the carvings, gargoylish in their allegory, on St. Peter's itself.

The male organ of generation, without any sense of indecency, the *lingum*, or *phallos* or *priapus*, to use the names of Greece and Rome, is the emblem of *Siva* or *Mahadeo* the "Great God", the *persona* of the Almighty, in all the hard facts of life and death. Indeed, if figured only in reverence, what fitter emblem for eternity and the Creator of Mankind! Unhappily and unfortunately, human nature cannot always rise to such sublime heights, and symbolism in certain sects degenerates to the most gross realism. It is the always understanding Lyall who writes of :

"The organs of birth and the circlet of bones  
And the loose loves carved on the temple stones."

Because of this attitude towards life, severely and properly logical as it is in due season, marriage in all castes and Indian races from the Brahmin to the most abject, is the most important matter of all. It is carried out with many ceremonies and observances, many of graceful intent and beautiful sentiment, in which the theory and the realization of human happiness and comradeship is prettily portrayed. Unfortunately, in glorifying the great rite of keeping the world alive, humble families ruin themselves financially for years,

a forcible illustration, however, of the importance and veneration with which marriage is regarded. In this book only where the customs run underground will the subject be discussed in more detail as throwing light on folk law, folk customs, and folk aberrations.

The actual marriage customs and ceremonies vary considerably, but those of high caste Hindu have the same main intent and for the most part pleasing symbolism. The lesser breed without the law, copy them with additions of their own, often drawn from religious totems and traditions whose origins are lost in the mists of time. The tendency of the depressed classes as they raise themselves at all, is to adopt child marriage and inhibit widow remarriage, thus aping their betters and leaving the wiser ways of their own. The manly martial classes, however, if they marry early, will not tolerate the premature cohabitation which is the curse of the effeminate intelligentsia and non-marital classes.

*Sati*, and all that has occurred and does still occur will be treated off a little later as one of the underground, secret, recurring and most popular occurrences, despite the fact that it is a hundred years since Lord William Bentinck proclaimed it illegal. However, the point is that the whole of the Indian family story is based on the inseparable bond between husband and wife, the constant duty of the wife to the husband, the joyful duties of procreation, and the worship without necessarily any hint of grossness, of the organs of birth and all that appertain thereto. Perhaps the favourite family idol or charm is that portraying *Parbatti*, or otherwise known as *Bhawani*, enthusiastically embracing and climbing up a giant *lingum* or *phallos* or her spouse the great *Siva* or *Mahadeo*, the emblem of force and maternity and everything else from which the springs and wells of life derive.

Since almost every daughter is provided for, there

is no such thing as women forced out or going eagerly out into the world to seek a livelihood. It may be said generally that the everyday Hindu wife, especially if treated with very ordinary consideration and kindness is the most admirable wife in the world. Duty as she views it with a big "D" is her watchword and it is she who says the family prayers and "holds up the hands," so that the worker shall go about his business with the family shrine duly attended to.

In most of the educated families, whether keeping *purdah* or not, the same is the rule except where Western ways may have run riot in new soil without the usual Western inhibitions to guide. The Eastern fears for emancipated women have not been quite unfounded, though no doubt again it is the exception that proves the rule. I must say I was a little amused, as well as lightly shocked, to hear two charming-looking Indian girls in semi-Indian kit, their hair in Eton crop, say to a young Indian in evening dress who had arrived late at a function in Britain, "Well you are a d——d rotter." That is harmlessly Western, but it is a pity that the East should pick up the diction of the lesser West.

There is one class for whom marriage often is not, and that is mixed up with the mystery of *Lena* and *Dena*, "taking" and "giving". It is the time-honoured rule of marriage in high-grade, high caste Hindu families, to give your daughters to your own or to a higher group and to take your son's wife from a lower. It is obvious, however, in this Hypergamy that there are classes at the top and at the bottom for whom there are either few husbands high enough, or no women of permissible status lower. For the women so situated, as with the Kulin Brahmins, there is therefore a disastrous state in which marriage to a god, a tree, or such-like, is essential if the necessary fiction of marriage in

due season, when none other is possible, is to be observed. Nor in such cases can liaison effect any aid to what may be the physical demands, which in a country where every woman expects to fulfil her role as a mother and almost always does, is more readily presented to the mind than in the West.

But with the small exceptions that exist in such cases it may be said that there are no unmarried women, but this, unfortunately, does not remove the condition of virginity, and this is one of the stories that brings us to the "House on the Wall".

From the foregoing it might be imagined that there are few sources as known in the West among unwanted or misused women, from whom the courtesan class can be drawn. But the devil has other resources.

#### THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Enough has been said elsewhere of child marriage, the ingrained persistent habit of Hindu India, and I have but outlined here the high ideals of life and death that underly it. Miss Mayo's "Mother India" dwelt on the evils that result therefrom very accurately, but the inference that might be drawn from that epoch-making book . . . epoch-making in that, translated into every known language, it made civilized India ashamed of the evils in her midst . . . is that the evils were much more widespread than the good, whereas except in certain classes it is the contrary. After Miss Mayo wrote *Mother India*, she produced another equally valuable book named *Number Two* which was the continuation of the subject as studied by the light of "The Report of the Age of Consent Committee of 1928—9," a committee set up by the Indian Assembly and the Indian Government after the world's furore that her first book had evoked.



The commanding points elicited in that inquiry and report was that child marriage was inseparately wrapped up in the Indian idea of a good life, that neither mother nor wives, as a whole, wished for change, and that no one seemed to care greatly for the large number of abuses which degraded an institution which had the wellbeing of man and woman for its basis. The most learned and even Westernized Brahmins, lawyers, professors, and others, were emphatic on the necessity and value of marriage and consummation before or at puberty, as an infrangible part of the ancient sacred law quoting XVIIIth Dharmasutra 21 : "A girl should be given in marriage before puberty" as unassailable and imperative. Miss Mayo terms the statute passed eventually as a typical piece of eyewash, "The April Fools Act," which, while making it illegal to give children in marriage before sixteen, made the penalties therefore practically unimposable. It was amply stated on the best authority that any Hindu girl whose *menses* commenced before marriage would consider herself eternally disgraced and unfit for decent society. In the lesser and outcaste classes, girls who for any reason grow up unmarried, become *jogtis*, i.e., prostitutes, as a matter of course.

The whole opinion of the South and Centre of Hindustan was so strong on the subject that tens of thousands of marriages were hastened on so that they should take place before the Act made them illegal, and the Brahmins, astrologers, and priests whose business it is to find the propitious dates for marriage, "rigged" signs of the constellations heartily so that the hastened marriage might be duly dubbed auspicious and licensed by the omens. The dislike of the new Act drafted by Indians was at once fathered by the public on to the British.

That shows the dangers and difficulties of legislating

in advance and against the genius of a people. In considering and where necessary reprobating the custom of child marriage it is essential to realize that there are two entirely different kinds thereof. There is that among the hardier folk of the North, where the marriage in early years is, except for its permanence, but analogous to the infant betrothal of the West in days gone by, followed by the formal joining when puberty has supervened referred to elsewhere, and there is the pernicious custom of certain classes in Bengal, a custom of the intelligentsia more than the humbler folk, of actually consummating a marriage before the bride reaches puberty. No one, as Sir Herbert Risley has remarked, who has seen the choice young men and goodly who march in the ranks of a Punjab regiment can for the moment imagine that their marriage customs can be harmful to the race. It is among the *clerkly-werkly* miseries of certain parts that the gravamen of Miss Mayo's book lies, and especially among the older men, and that with their immature second wives.

I have written elsewhere<sup>1</sup> more fully on the good and evil of this custom of child marriage, and how, when conducted as it was meant to be conducted, it was in many ways an admirable binding and weaving of social life. And I also showed how the abuses arose. But as some commentary on the ways of the people, and also as a riposte for the machinations of what Sir Samuel Hoare in this year of Grace 1932, terms the Lie Factory, which has recently endeavoured to accuse the British soldier—that good-humoured guardian of law and order and justice—of rape and insult to woman, the following extract from an Indian newspaper of April 8th of this same year is illuminating both for the

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<sup>1</sup> "The Religions and Hidden Cults of India" (Sampson Low and Marston).

ferocity evinced and the views of the Indian judge who tried the case. It is perhaps fair to omit the place and name of this Indian, who happened to be District and Sessions Judge. A Mahratta was accused under sections 344 and 325 of the Indian penal code for wrongful confinement and causing grievous injury to his wife, Mashni, aged thirteen.

The Prosecution case was that Mashni was married to the accused some seven or eight years ago, and since then had been living with her mother. Some time in August, 1930, and a few days before the Ganesh Festival, accused went to his mother-in-law's house and asked her to send the girl home for the festival. She refused. On August 25th, he again came back accompanied by several others and took his wife away by force. After this it was further alleged that accused confined her (the girl) in a room with her arms tied up. Accused also drove two double-pointed plough nails one into each foot of the girl.

In sentencing the accused, the Judge observed that accused's pleader had urged him to take a lenient view of the case, having regard to the fact that the husband of the girl had confined her under what he thought to be a husband's right. "It was a pity," remarked the Judge, "that among the poor classes husbands still asserted their rights in that manner, but it could not be denied that the present case was unusual. The treatment meted out to the girl was cruel, but ignorance was partly responsible for it." It is a side-light on the problem!

The cause may have been a dispute as to how near to puberty the girl was, or it may have been due, as is by no means unknown, to the mother having some scheme of getting out of the marriage despite the solemn contract, and giving her daughter elsewhere. But it is something of a comment as to how

child marriage can be abused. On the other hand, far more cases could be cited of it as an extremely happy and satisfactory arrangement. Miss Mayo dwells rightly on the bringing together of immature lads and eager brides of the student class, and that is an important aspect as anyone connected with Indian students knows, who cannot be both candidates for matriculation and adequate grooms at the same time. The harm on the young woman of early childbirth under right conditions, however, is not so apparent, and we may remember how well-bred mares are put to the stud with advantage long before their bones and muscles are fit for ordinary work.

So how far child marriage is an evil if well conducted, or how far it is possible to mitigate the evil while retaining the good, is another matter, but there is one terrible aftermath which must be discussed and that is widowhood, under the ruthless laws of the high caste. Many of the lower and outcaste folk do not marry their daughters till they grow up, unlike the high caste Hindu. They, as a rule, allow considerable pre-matrimonial license as in parts of rural England and Wales, and only in the case of pregnancy does matrimony follow. It is quite possible that it was this license, no doubt prevalent when the Aryans first entered India, which compelled them to adopt the custom of child marriage and the earliest possible consummation as the lesser evil. Among the *Naikdas*, a folk in Western India akin to the *Bhils*, there is this curious custom. If an unmarried girl gives birth to a child and the father refuses marriage, he may compound for a sum of money, in which case he is actually suckled by her, repeating the word "mother" seven times. There may be some connection here with the polyandry of Southern India, and the motherly position that a woman adopts who is wife to several brothers.

## WIDOWHOOD, SATI, AND THE FUNERAL PYRE

Before the decree passed under Lord William Bentinck in 1835, it was not unusual for high caste Hindu widows to mount the funeral pyre of their deceased husband and, sitting with their husband's head in their hands, be consumed with him in the flames. By no means all widows did so, but it was highly encouraged, immensely admired, and it was all part of the age-old cult of inseparability. Those who might wish to make tiresome remarks might say that they do not hear much about the burning of husbands on the wife's pyre, but it is fair enough answer to that to say that man and husband are too important an item in the world's cosmos to be wasted thus scurvily. Hindu custom exalts the male side of life, but it also demands duties which if faithfully carried out as indeed in Western life, makes the partnership more than endurable.

The inexorable rule among the mass of high-class Hindus but not among certain of the more northern virile communities is that widows remain unwed, dressed in white, the head shaved, deprived of all ornament, a drudge in their own families or more probably that of their husband's . . . that is the lot of the Hindu widow of any pretension to caste. This applies equally to a lady who has shared her husband's bed as to a child widow, who has never seen or known a husband. Hard as the lot of the adult co-habiting widow is, it is mild compared with the fate of the child widow whose miserable state thus similarly condemned, is quite unwarranted by any law of God or man. Hindu opinion, however, visits this on the widow as a punishment for the ill-luck of her husband's premature death, for which her star is obviously responsible. The various societies that countenance

widow remarriage must break faith with orthodoxy and therefore probably even break away from the religion that they know and which alone to them has drive. These societies have long flourished, have considerable status in certain circles in Bengal, but yet hardly touch the fringe of the problem. In fact, the breaking away from the old customs does unfortunately carry with it the atheism which is rather a feature among the young Indian who studies in the West.

All this is, however, another story, but the fate of orthodox widows who survive has in the past accentuated the enthusiasms with which widows went to the pyre. Perhaps it was intended to that end. There are those of perhaps a ribald turn of mind who insist that the burning of widows in a polygamous country was the great protection of the husband from the poison of a jealous wife and the real cause of the custom.

It is to be understood that the whole countryside longs for and loves a *Sati*. The moment that a widow was known to have so decided all the neighbourhood flocked in pilgrimage to be blessed by her, to touch the hem of her garment. The poor victim goes in exaltation to the pyre and is arranged decorously atop either with her husband's head in her lap or lying alongside him. Long poles are then laid across her with which she can be held down when the pain of the fire breaks down resolution. Loud bray the conches of the priest lest the pitiful cries of the burning widow be heard. Loud beat the drums while the way of heaven is being opened. All over the countryside are little stone altars which with two little footmarks carved thereon show where a widow has been "devote".

It is the strapping young widow who for bidden the flames but kept to the drudgery, breaks

away and furnishes one way of recruiting the jewelled denizens of "The House on the Wall".

The last public cremation of widows and concubines probably took place in 1839 when several of the wives and certain spouses of Maharajah Runjheet Singh of Lahore were burnt by the Sikhs fiercely and adoringly, but another case occurred when the Prime Minister of the Sikh regency, Jowahir Singh, was summoned before the rebellious Sikh Army on the plains of Mian Mir. He arrived a-howdah-top, with him the infant heir. The soldiery had the heir removed to a tent nearby and then shot the Wazir without mercy, and equally without mercy thrust his women-folk to the flames with him.

But all throughout India every year, clandestine *Satis* take place before the police can interfere. Three or four years ago on the Ganges not far from Holy Prag, which is now Allahabad, the police did arrive to interrupt a *Sati*, rescuing a half-burnt whimpering lass from the shallows of the river to which she had escaped from the pyre hardby. And unless any one shall say that no such things happen, let us again quote from an Indian journal of April, 1932, when the police also arrived too late. This comes from Cawnpore on April 20th.

"The Inspector of Police stated that Gulzar Singh and Dalel Singh, younger brothers of Bhure Singh, reported to Mangalwar police station that their brother had died in the night, and that his widow was bent on *Sati* though she had been told that *Sati* was prohibited. Before the party could get back they heard a noise and saw smoke coming from a fire some distance away. On reaching the fire they found that the bodies of Bhure Singh and his widow were burning. Kinder Singh and eight others were charged with murder and abetment of suicide. Bhure Singh's

brothers had prepared a funeral pyre and set light to it. The fire was still burning, and between two and three hundred people had gathered there. The bystanders would not let the police touch the pyre. It was further alleged that Kinder Singh and Gulzar Singh had offered obeissance to Bhure Singh's wife before she got on the fire and that Kinder Singh one of her brothers-in-law, apparently set light to it." There had been evinced the enthusiasm with which the whole Hindu world accepts a *Sati*.

That is a story of 1932 and so wedded is the country to the old custom, that relaxation of administration already in progress has allowed the old evils to arise.

The above in brief is the story of *Sati*, and the devoted wife who would accompany her beloved to the next world ascending with the smoke that releases both their spirits from their earth-bound dwelling. Grim, macabre and beautiful in its supreme conception is this terrible but beloved-of-the-people rite.

How wrapped up in high-grade Hindu life this tragedy of the pyre has been, the stories of Rajputana tell us. Here is one of them.

When Ajit Singh of Marwar in Rajputana was murdered by his son some centuries ago, it is on record that six queens, his wives, ladies of the highest families in the land, went to the pyre and with them equally proudly and cheerfully went fifty-eight curtain-wives of affection or concubines. The names of the ladies of high degree, but not of the silver and copper, are recorded. Suffice it to say that the souls of the curtain wives followed their lord's, in company with the six queens aforesaid, viz., the Chouhan Queen, the Batthi Queen a scion of Jeysulmer, the Ghazelle of Dhirawal, the Tuar Queen, the Chaora Rani, and the Shekawatti Rani, truly a goodly company of the most noble and



most beautiful ladies of the ancient houses. Thus the account of the burning.

"The drum sounded. The funeral train moved on. All invoked the name of Hira Queen of Heaven. Charity was dispensed like fallen rain, the countenance of the Queens were radiant in the sun, Uma (another name for the Queen of Heaven) looked down and promised they should enjoy the society of Ajit in each successive incarnation. As the smoke curled from the mass of flame the assembled multitudes shouted : 'Well done ! *Khaman Kher !*' The pile flashed like a volcano. The faithful queens laid their bodies in the flames."

That embodies the Hindu conception of wifely constancy which animates still the women of India, and lies at the bottom of child marriage. It might be all relegated to the dim forgotten things if it was not so popular in the memories of the people, and so easily brought out into the open as in the case of the widow of Bhure Singh this very Year of Grace, and the cases that have been brought to light from time to time in recent years.

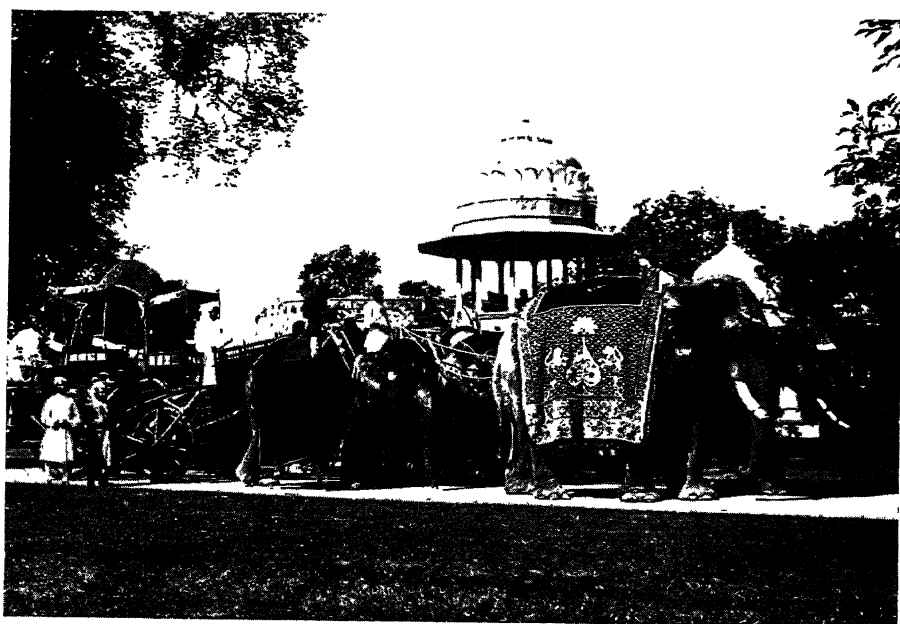
#### THE CHOUHAN QUEEN SUNJOTA OF DELHI

Lest anyone should doubt what Indian women may be made of, in love or in wit, read the story of Queen Sunjota as told by the Rajput bards.

Once upon a time before the Rajputs were driven from Delhi, of which they were then the Emperors and Premier Kings in Ind, the Chouhan Emperor carried off by force the Princess of Kanauj, Sunjota by name. She had rejected the assembled princes at her father's court, and thrown the garland of marriage round the neck of her hero, and in his arms it is related abandoned herself to the wildest passion. Then she is to be seen taking part in a five days combat between her



EAST AND WEST IN THE CHANDNI CHOUK OF DELHI



AN ELEPHANT CORTEGE IN RAJPUTANA

QUAINT TRANSPORT

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father's and husband's forces, witnessing the overthrow of the former and the carnage of both armies, and then in her arms lulling her victorious husband to the neglect of all his kingly duties.

But when the Moslem came down from Ghuzni we are shown her driving him to the battle and inspiring him to fight till death, promising to join him in the mansions of the sun.

Sunjota must have been a remarkable and thrice famous woman, for the bards record her reply when the king left his warriors to consult with her as to the opposing of Mahmud of Ghuzni.

"Who asks women for advice? The world deems their understanding shallow; even when truths issue from their lips, none listen thereto. Yet what is the world without women; we have the forms of *Sakti* with the fire of *Siva*; we are at once thieves and sanctuaries; we are the vessels of virtue and of vice . . . of knowledge and of ignorance. The man of wisdom, the astrologer, can from the books calculate the motion and course of the planets; but in the book of women he is ignorant; this is not saying of to-day, it has ever been so; our book has not been mastered, therefore to hide their ignorance they say in woman there is no wisdom! Yet woman shares your joys and your sorrows. Even when you depart for the mansions of the sun, we part not. Hunger and thirst we cheerfully partake with you; we are as the lakes of which you are the swans, what are you when absent from our bosoms."

Which whether spoken as it was close on a thousand years ago, whether spoken to-day, or when Babylon was at her zenith, is a very remarkable and effective swan song. Alas! For swan song it proved to be Her Emperor was defeated, captured and put to death by Mahmud, and she, faithful to her vows, mounted the funeral pyre.

## POLYGAMY, POLYGINNY, POLYANDRY

Polygamy is not a practice among high-caste Hindus, with certain exceptions, unless the first wife be barren. The bearing of a son is so important, indeed so essential a part of a man's salvation and future reincarnation, that the first wife readily acquiesces in a second under these circumstances and even takes trouble to see that the new one is a promising subject. Nor can polyginny or concubinage be said to exist, though all maidservants coming with a wife may in theory be expected to share their mistresses bed. In practice high-caste Hindu life in the house is decorous and monogamous. In low and outcaste circles, however, it is otherwise, two and more wives being permitted, there being none to say them nay. Among the vagrant and vagabond folk the women who accompany the show of snake charmer, conjurors, etc., may all be wives. In other words but the licensed labourers in the field. But the reputable low caste folk do have in many parts more than one wife. Where, however, the section or sub-caste is raising itself in the world, it is likely to follow the high caste custom in the matter. Among Moslems, four wives are permitted by the sacred law, and reputable concubinage is not objected to. But in fact the ordinary man finds his hands full with one lady of the house, although princes and great nobles interpret their license both in wives and concubines more liberally. The more patriarchal the method and custom of life the more patriarchal are the ways of a man with his wife.

Polyandry, the sharing of a wife by several husbands, is another matter and is now little more than an interesting survival among certain races in the south and among some of the semi-Buddhist folk in the high Himalaya.

Polyandry at one time must have been an Aryan

custom. In the great and popular Hindu Epic the *Mahabharata*, Draupati was the wife of five Pandav warriors. The Greek historians mention it as a feature in the Punjab. Modern polyandry seems to take the fraternal form, where a woman is the wife of several brothers the eldest being recognized as the head husband, and where the wife generally comes to mother the whole lot of the brothers. This custom of life is prevalent among the Nairs of Southern India, and certain tribes on the Malabar Coast, as also among the Todas in the Nilgherry Hills. The ordinary habit of the lower castes of Hindus of a widow marrying her husband's brother is probably a remnant of the old habit, while where polyandry is the habit matriarchy prevails. We also see the sister's son acting as priest on ceremonial occasions and the maternal uncles arranging marriages and acting as the family representative on other occasions in many parts of India, all of which seem to hail from polyandrous days. In the Himalaya, the scarcity of women is also held as being responsible for the custom, but there is no doubt that here and elsewhere it is customary that only one husband shall be "in residence" at one time. They go into residence by roster and in any case the presence of the shoes of the husband in possession outside the woman's door is enough indication to the others that they are unwelcome.

A curious custom prevails among the *Velallahs* in the South where at times boys are married to elder women. The wives then cohabit with the father till the son is grown up. There are also folk among whom father and sons share wives, and certainly concubines. It will be remembered that in Genesis xxxiv, 22, the intimacy of Reuben with one of Jacob's concubines the handmaid of Leah, seems to be no great matter. Dravidian India seems to be of the same mind.

Divorce is probably not a recognized institution

among high caste Hindus, and indeed the matter is held in some doubt by jurists. In any case it would only be for unchastity and in this case the wife may not marry again in reputable circles. She probably disappears among the lower castes, or finds her way to the disreputable quarters of the town unless her own family will take proper care of her. Among the low caste, divorce for unchastity will be pronounced by the caste-*punchayat* or council. The British Laws of India embraces and codify all reputable rules and practices on this subject.

Among the customs of ancient origin and by no means extinct is a form of the old drama known as the *Droit du seigneur* which was by no means the act of licentious tyranny that it has been represented but began for a very different reason. It was purely an act of eugenic duty, and undertaken in the interest of the race. Those who are intimate with those parts of France where traces of old things remain will notice the looks and mien of many of the people. The *premières nocés* meant not only the higher strain in the first born, but also owing to the well-known tenacity of the women, and persistence of strain, the tendency to keep the mould in subsequent conceptions. Another and more romantic as well as practical side of the question is strongly and beautifully shown in those verses of Lawrence Hope, "*Le Droit du Seigneur*". So it is that the priests in many parts of India exercised this right for the good and the sanctification of the race. Even when the Zamorins of Calicut married Nair women, they were thus as it were sweetened before the royal coach, and the priest might thus deputize for three days. The same principle is to be found in more than one quarter in Dravidian though possibly not in Aryan circles. There was also a practical advantage of the custom which it is not necessary to specify.

## MARRIAGE TO INDIA

The number of European or American women that are marrying Indians is considerable. In Lahore alone there are said to be a hundred. Those who may think of doing so should ponder well. Some Indians do make admirable husbands for European women, and have many characteristics and ways that may appeal to the feminine heart and mind. But those who would look before they leap, should read *Marriage into India*, by a young American wife of Swiss race who had met her husband at a university in the United States. It tells more forcibly than anything I have ever seen of the troubles ahead. Her husband was good and kind enough. But he went to India to use his Western accomplishments to earn a living in Indian business. The lady had many heartbreaks, she had not married into a Western way of living as might have been the case if she had married a lawyer or Indian official holding an equivalent British position. The climate without amelioration, the want of sanitation and comfort, the absence of Western food and markets, the impossible arrangements for accouchements, the financial struggle of her ambitious husband and his scurvy treatment by his fellow countrymen all made her life a misery, despite her affection for and sympathy with him. A sad book and a sad story, genuine and told by one eager to make the best of things.

The question of the offspring of these marriages is a new problem that is not yet ripe for solution. It will put the Anglo-Indian, to use the official term for Eurasian, question into a new form. In westernized circles there are enough European wives of Indian husbands in larger places, to form a society of their own, should European opinion generally look askance, and there are enough for those happily situated, to come



to the assistance of one who is not. This parallels the situation in the French dominion where marriages between French women and Eastern men have taken place. A curious and earlier phase of this aspect of mixed marriages, with which the writer has once or twice been in contact, has been the wife from the Australian gold-fields, returning with a Ghilzai husband to Afghanistan, and where ultimate story and finale would be of interest and let us hope, happiness.

### THE INTIMACIES OF MARRIAGE

In these days when the most intimate subjects are openly discussed between young Western folk in open converse, and when there is neither reticence or delicacy concerning those matters which for thousands of years women and men preferred to treat with reticence, certain matters of difficulty may be mentioned that are worthy of understanding by Western women. The first is, that speaking generally that Eastern custom admits no period when husband and wife may prefer to live apart. The difference in custom of the races has come as a shock to Western ideas and is a fruit of trouble between Western wives and Eastern husbands.

Then it is well to remember that all Mohammedans should and many do undergo the same rite as do the Jews, and an alteration which was undoubtedly born of sanitary experience in the warmer east. It is also well to remember that the ideas of the East as related in this book elsewhere, on what we in the West consider "moral conduct", are lax, though the corruption of the modern novelist has weakened moral thought in this connection. Unfortunately, too, the East in addition to its own ideas as to its relations with women has an entirely different outlook, with regard

to perverse actions. A woman marrying in the West would have no fears lest she should ever come within the range of male perversity. The East has different ideas, and moral inhibitions are not necessarily strong. It is for these reasons more than any objection to the mingling of colour which, may easily be pure Aryan on both sides, that women are warned against marriage with Indians about whom they know little and whose place in the Indian social world is not a guarantee of sexual rectitude.

#### THE AMENITIES OF SOCIAL LIFE

It will not be out of place to conclude this chapter with a word on the social side of life in India, both in the case of high and low caste folk and non-caste folk. It is not too much to say that in the past, except in regard to those very few folk who have adopted Western ways, and of the wealthy Parsee community in Bombay, there is no sort of social intercourse between the sexes even in the case of women "out of *purdah*". The greater number of well-to-do women both Hindu and Moslem are still "*purdah*", that is to say, withdraw on reaching adolescence to the privacy of their houses and there remain except so far as they may take the air in closed conveyances, for the rest of their natural days. They only meet their husbands and brothers, perhaps some very near male relations. Thus speaking generally there is no social life of amusement and entertainment among educated people at which the sexes intermingle. Parties and receptions of sorts among *purdah* ladies there are, but the male is not there. No *purdah* woman must see her woman friend's husband or be seen by him. Not that because this is so, is the life unpopular; far from it. The seclusion and dignity of the life appeals to many. Cases often

occur of women who from their husband's rank and status in life have never been "*purdah*", assuming that state when their husbands' worldly goods justify it. The wives of the working men cannot be *purdah* even if they wanted to be. Apart from the question of ill-health due to the laziness which grows on many Indian women, the ill-effects are not serious. But it is on the men that the want of female society unconsciously reacts and is responsible for much of the features of courtesan life which will be dealt with in the next chapter. How strict the old-fashioned view of the secluded wife and how unrelated men must not see or be seen by women is illustrated by a story which a few years ago highly amused the drawing-rooms of Simla.

"Her Excellency," the Viceroy's lady, it does not matter which, was giving a party to *purdah* ladies. The weather had been fine and a part of the lawn outside had been walled off from the public gaze by high canvas walls of *kanaats* taken from tents. Within this the ladies could emerge and enjoy the air without the defiling gaze of the strange males. But it was showery weather, and Her Ex., who was none too robust, was talking with some of her guests in the further end of the lawn when a hailstorm came on with that suddenness which is almost special to the Himalaya. The anxious aide-de-camp on duty who was solicitous for Her Ex.'s health, forgetting the heinousness of his action, rushed in with an umbrella and a mackintosh. Dire was the consternation. The few English ladies present did not know what to do. Scuttle and consternation and indignation was evinced on every Indian face. Then an old Mussulman lady of great presence and more knowledge of the world than most, came to the rescue. She knew that there might easily be disaster and panic, that guards, knowing not what was

happening, might rush in, that the assembled ladies might be seen of many, and a great scandal arise.

She rushed to the centre of the enclosed lawn and the tent shelters in which the guests were crowding, shouting "Ladies! Ladies! I beg of you! Don't be alarmed. It is only one of Her Excellency's Eunuchs!"

All was well, semi-males of that category don't count, and were well within the ken of Eastern minds, and still in use in the great courts to guard the harems. The ladies were pacified and the offender was hustled out wondering in vain if it would be possible to prevent the story spreading.

The march of the West is, of course, rapidly ending *purdah* for the Westernized. A great many women, anxious to "break their *purdah*" but too shy to do so uncountenanced by others, come to Simla and other hill stations, and there emerge and let their wings grow, to return to the plains with sufficient aplomb to carry off the great change.

Society is being very much enriched by the appearance of such beautiful and charming women. Some of them adopt a mixture of Eastern and Western dress, as have the Parsee ladies, which can be very alluring. In Bombay, Lahore, and many other business cities, the Indian young women actually dance, and dance too with Europeans, but this, all to the good as it probably is, does not touch more than a small fringe of the peoples.

It is interesting to note that while Islam has always thought the *purdah* essential for women of any degree, it is said that the lawless conditions which ensued on the break up of the Mogul Empire was largely responsible for the adoption of *purdah* by Hindus merely as a measure of protection. This acted something in this way. When hordes of Mahratta and Pindaree horse, Companies of Freebooters and the like, scoured

the land, many a girl in the vicinity of a town or village would be snatched up and carried away at a trooper's saddle-bow running with her captor, the gauntlet of the matchlocks of the village guard and *chiga*. But when women wore *burqas* and heavy veils, you might run all the risk to find that some elderly beldame was your prize, so women found their life safer in *purdah* and veils.

Such social life as is now developing is of the most formal kind. And such happenings as a man dropping into tea for an informal and intimate chat with an Indian lady of his acquaintance, or taking her out to some entertainment is as yet, almost entirely unknown. Therefore, the Indian from time immemorable has sought amusement and female society where he can get it. How he has done so will be told in the next chapter. At the same time it is equally to be appreciated that the adoption of Western ways of life is spreading very fast among certain of the educated classes, and social life among such will change more and more. They are, however, a very small portion of the millions of India.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOUSE ON THE WALL

HOUSES ON THE WALL—CONCERNING COURTESANS—TEMPLE VENERY THROUGH THE AGES—THE COURTESANS AND DANCING GIRLS OF INDIA—HAMESHA BEHAR BEGUM—VENERY AND TRAGEDY

#### HOUSES ON THE WALL

WITH the outline of social life that has been given it is not surprising that the men of India should seek some external society amusement elsewhere than in their own homes, however pleasant in their quiet way the latter be. When we come to study the houses with the carved and latticed verandas from which the frail fair peer and even ogle, we shall see that one of their purposes is of comparatively innocent intent, providing a salon of gossip of news, of entertainment where the zithar twangs and love songs are crooned, where *hugas* are tended and scented to the recorded taste of each frequenter. Clever dancers are to be seen, tea and sherbets quaffed, and the houses rank in this respect as do some continental establishments and the tea shops of Japan, as but places where feminine chatter and badinage may be enjoyed.

The ladies of the establishment are engaged by the proprietress for many qualities, and the power of charming by dance and of entertainment is not the least. Who or what the denizens of these latticed upper verandas are, from what class they come and how and why, it is now proposed to investigate, and to endeavour to throw forward a little of the sandalwood and rose-water attraction which such mysterious places must have, especially when the zithars twang and the

haunting luring throb of the little drum comes down the court on the midnight air. In all the great cities of India as in the rest of the East stands the quarter where the *filles de joie* await their clientele or as some would have it, their prey. Whether it be in Bombay or Calcutta, whether in such cities as Lucknow and Lahore, whether in the great trade emporiums like Peshawur, from time immemorial has reigned therein that quarter to which all the world's gossip comes. There sit the women of the town, of many and divers races and origins, for whom none take thought, and who to all the world are a race and profession apart, this oldest profession in the world, to which are due all the *lacrymæ rerum* that of which menkind suffer.

#### CONCERNING COURTESANS

Before looking at the question of this old profession, as it stands in the East to-day, it will be to our interest to see what is known of the past, and to consider for a moment, the whole story. Far back into the mists of time, the illicit and irregular union of men and women merely for the gratification of the great urge that the fountains of life have planted in mankind, has resulted in public women being a feature of every land. The ancient religions long gripped the subject, and endeavoured with more wisdom than our more militant Christian leaders to, in some sense, control the question and make it not entirely devoid of a spiritual side, strange as that may seem. Those who stirred the day-springs were not unworthy of some recognition, and women who devoted their lives to this undeniable need of a worldly world were not treated as outcaste and miseries to end their days in lock hospitals and lazarets. Girls—as they are in India to this day—were devoted to that aspect of the deity which dealt with

human affections and urges, and had the feeling that they served the world, and the Creator of the world, that they were not cast away, that there was a deity to whom they might appeal, and that they had a niche in the world. How far this was entirely evil, only the broadest and most sympathetic of Christian moralists can perhaps decide for us. But in the ancient days "prostitutes", to use for a moment the unworthy word, were of both sexes. Though the world has always realized that the day-springs of fecundity in man and woman differed in their needs, it realized that women's needs to a great extent were based on something more holy and reverential than those of men. The male temple prostitutes of the past had nothing to do with homo-sexuality, they were there to minister on occasion to the needs of women. But whereas female officiants were merely connecting the fervour of male passion with the divine gift of life, and giving some excuse therefore, the male officiant was there not so much to minister to passion as to the right and proper desire of offspring of the barren matron. The young priest or lay brother was duly commissioned, therefore, as part of the duties of his office. The same idea, but hallowed and sublimated and translated into spiritual realms produces the conception in holy minds of the Bride of the Lamb, and how even this idea was translated into evil by weaker if exalted women, the records of nunneries show too well. Physical and mental ecstasy have a very close relation one with another. Indeed some of the practices of *Yoga* but aim at exciting the sexual powers and ecstasies, and then diverting them to some purpose other than that for which they were intended, in the development of unusual powers of mind over matter.

The lusty young priest or temple male was regarded as deputizing for the God, the giver of life, a



conception, however, too full of danger to be easily accepted. Far away in the back of the subconscious mind, the flocking of women round assistant curates that used to be and often still is a feature of English parish life, must spring from the same human idea.

There are to this day in India certain religious mendicants or *yogis* whose advent in a village is hailed by barren matrons with enthusiasm. They arrive, marching nude as is their custom, and barren women will lay hands on their person and reverentially kiss the organ of generation, that may possibly be blessed in opening the womb that is closed. The East is very real and intense in such matters, and Hindu husbands with souls to save are not too particular as to son-getting, if they fail themselves.

The existence of public women, whether privately or officially maintained, is unfortunately a concomitant of sea life. The ancient ports of the Phœnicians of the Mediterranean, were notorious, and Marseilles and Port Said, but carry on with zeal the ancient story. In the latter case, since the British-managed Egyptian Police relieved the French in that port a quarter of a century ago, decency has taken control of the old licence. In such places as Alexandria in Ptolemaic days, courtesanship reached an astounding phase and almost a dignity, and there the Greek *Hetaïres* reigned with their salons, by no means entirely devoted to venery, but places where the learned met for semi-learned gossip and badinage. Round the world to-day, unfortunately, the sea-ports and more especially those of the East and of Latin regimes are notorious. The text already quoted of the remark of the wise Francis Bacon, who knew, runs thus :—

“I know not how it is, but perils demand to be  
Paid with pleasures, and martial men seem to be  
Given to wine as they are to women.”

That is the story of the world's seaports, more intense now than ever in the days of Phœnicia and Alexandria, where sailors and merchants come in from the perils and labours of the sea. Nor can the Christian Churches, it would seem, in any way help in the matter, endeavour they never so earnestly. In Germany, where good professors labour to get to the root of things, the incidence and uprising of a courtesan is carefully studied and catalogued. There the opinion holds that the same type of character which inclines young men to criminal life for the excitement thereof, and the ease with which guerdon may be attained, in women leads to immoral life as pleasanter than work. No doubt that must be true to some extent, and here in Britain where the religious training of children has been thrown aside by the State that may and must at times be so too.<sup>1</sup> The guerdon of honest wage is poor, compared with apparent guerdon of a "gay" life and so those of little balance fall. Laziness and love of pleasure has probably more to say to it than seduction and abandonment. If we go to the Latin lands we shall see another aspect, where girls of reputable states will apprentice themselves to *maisons tolérés* to earn their dowries.

This faint allusion to the Western problem is needed to see an entirely different incidence in the East. There only in the case of the ill-treated Hindu widow do the same forces come into play. Normally speaking there is no dreadful White Slave traffic, a traffic which, be it remembered, has two different aspects, the super-infamous enticement of the moral girl to an evil life, and worse still if it be for foreign parts, and the infamous but lesser trade in attracting free courtesans to some Eastern *maison* where justice

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<sup>1</sup> c.f. Mr. Lloyd George on schools : "Remove the brawling priests and let the master in."

and fair dealing or welfare care exist not at all. There are *maisons tolérés* where an amiable old lady knits at the door, where every girl has her share of the trade duly and properly credited to her, where terminated indentures are duly honoured and where the health of both girls and clients are strictly guarded, and in contrast there are the hells of the trans-Atlantic and Pacific where only the courtesan with the temper and character of a virago, can possibly extract a semblance of fair treatment.

In turning eastwards we shall see how the whole venue changes, not necessarily for the better, but to an entirely different provenance. Here again we shall see that there was some good in the ancient consecrated role, which even if it left the women outcaste of man, did not leave them outcaste of God.

#### TEMPLE VENERY THROUGH THE AGES

Looking back for a moment into the past, we see that in the cults, worships and temples of Adonis, Osiris, Ishtar, Aphrodite, the same principles are held and practices regularized and authorized. In Babylonia it was Ner-Se-Ga or Gir-Sig-Ga who acted as *Manzas-panim* "deputy of the god", and it was for this purpose, no doubt, that on the top of each lofty zigurrat, each Tower of Babel to the god, a chamber with couch was provided for the celestial bride. Heirs to titles and broad lands that would otherwise go a-begging, were thus begot. The Mediæval Church would probably have pouched the said lands; the human wisdom of the ancients preferred it otherwise. We see something of the male story, in allusions in the Book of Kings, and we should realize that the term "sodomy" is really a term for immorality, not perversity, and is sued to describe the natural misdemeanours of both

sexes such as practiced in the courts of the City of the Dead Sea, and the Revised Version is inclined to show it so. King Asa chases out the "sodomites" and "sodomitesses", who had picked up the rites and habits of the temples of Ishtar or Ashtaroth.

This heathen conception of the devoted male who deputizes for the god, is but carrying into sex matters the principle of the champion and deputy in other walks and roles of life.

In the East in India, all historians and contemporary writers agree that the number of courtesans was immense in every town and city and that from earliest times they had some status of esteem. The children of courtesans were a recognized people, being referred to as *Kumati-putra* "the sons of a maiden", and *Agru*, "the son of an unmarried girl". It is not many western tongues whose vocabulary is thus enriched. In the Jataka the courtesan is referred to as held in a certain degree of esteem. It was, however, but a condescending esteem, since the fear of re-incarnation in the "womb of a harlot" was one of the matters that might haunt a man's mind, and was perhaps an inhibition against acts that might earn such an incarnation.

In the 15th century Abdur-Razak, the Turkish Ambassador to the powerful Hindu state of Vijianagar in Southern India, speaks of the countless courtesans at that capital. In the days of the Emperor Akbar, they were known as "Courtesans of the Realm" a recognized estate that needed due provision. It is true that the specified quarters were usually known as *Shaitanpura*, the Devils-town, ~~possibly however, more from the money drawn from men there than by reason of the morals.~~

In this same century flourished Mira Bhai in Rajputana, a Vishnuvite votary of vengery and Shakti, and ardent preacher of the glories of Krishna, the world's

joyous lover, the "Gopi-nath" (Lord of the milkmaids), and a preacher of the mysteries of *Lingam-Yoni*. She is looked on as the patroness of courtesans, who frequently bear this name, which Miss Slade should not have been allowed to adopt when joining the Gandhi household. To meet a courtesan when starting on a journey is accounted a good omen, though why, no man can explain.

#### THE COURTESANS AND DANCING GIRLS OF INDIA

Who then are the courtesans of India, and whence do they spring in this land, where there are no maids and where there is little seduction, or running away to escape the drudgery of respectability and the solid day's work. The answer is this, they all come in one form or another from the outcaste and criminal tribes and races, or else from the widows of better folk who cannot stand the cruel life of mourning and slavery that has just been described. There is some life and jollity in the *chakla*,<sup>1</sup> there is some human touch, even to be a light o' love. The great world moves there and the men that matter come. The gossip runs up and down the gamut of affairs great and small. Not so in the mother-in-laws' house, for the widow whose evil star has brought her man to the funeral pyre. Be she matron or virgin, the white widow's sheet and the shaved head is her position and what wonder is it that the *chakla* and the *randi-bazaar*<sup>2</sup> see her.

But the mass of them come from the lowest of the depressed classes and untouchables and from outcaste tribes. Sonsy and hearty, lithe of figure and graceful of mould are the gypsy girls, beautiful of teeth with breasts like towers, and all the grace that the

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<sup>1</sup> Courtesan quarter.

<sup>2</sup> lit. widows bazaar, by implication courtesans quarters.



THE HUMBLER DANCING TROLLOPE OF THE BAZAARS



THE BLIND DRUMMER AT THE MOSQUE OF FATEHPORE SIKRI

*To face page 80.]*



world can imagine in some of them, grace that is born of heaven and condemned for no reason, to be worthless as the foam on the sea-shore and to give the day-spring of their lives to make a loafers' holiday. The dancers have matriarchal descent for many generations perhaps, for though all dancers are courtesans, all courtesans are not dancers. The recruiting, however, of the dancer class comes also from one more source, the unwanted daughter. The unwanted daughter may be sold, given to, or stolen by a gypsy tribe and sold on to some duenna of dancing girls, herself retired from the craft or from keeping houses of ill-fame. If she be comely and shapely and teachable she will be taught all the skill of the dancers craft, and also, be it remembered, she may grow to great power. Some wealthy merchant and young prince may be attracted and spend much of his patrimony on her as in the rest of the world. She may be prudent, save money, avoid court-jealousies, and retire to end her days in the odour of sanctity as also is done in the West. She will rarely have to sink to the complete misery of the uncared for, that the thoughtless West metes out for most of them.

Apart from the professional women, the lasses of the criminal tribes, immoral baggages though they may be, are bright enough to meet on a country road full of primitive gladness. There are the well-moulded breasts of the temple carvings, wonderful "teeth like pearls"—bright eyes and laughing lips, bright dyed skirts and brassières, jingling glass and zinc bangles and anklets—gems on the horn of the morning—yet, but foam on the sea shore.

The actual groups and coteries of outcaste courtesans and dancing girls are many and curious. In the West of India are the *Salbs*, courtesans of the *Lingayat* form of Hinduism. The good looking girls of this set become courtesans and between ages of 8 and 12 are invested



with an anklet (*gaje*) of small brass bells. Plain girls are reserved for marriage. The *Kalavants*<sup>1</sup> also in the West are both musicians and courtesans as are also *Derlis*, *Bandis*, *Adbalkis*, *Padis* and numerous others, some of whom have strange rules and customs rigidly observed.

Just as in the West there are demi-mondaines of surpassing beauty, prestige and wealth, who history has shown to us controlling even thrones, and who at all periods exist in a world of their own that may not even be notorious, so there is the East and inner circle of beauty and fascination that almost is beyond price.

Vastly wealthy Indians of Bombay and Calcutta support some of such in jewellery and clothing worth a king's ransom, and whose beauty and daintiness exists for their eyes alone. Equally may they come from the foam of the sea-shore, but foam whose fame is due to beauty of person, cleverness and alertness of mind, and skill in dance, which alone can earn them such a position. Outside police circles they would be unknown to the Western world in India.

#### HAMESHA BEHAR BEGUM

Let us start by invitation, to the courts of Hamesha Behar<sup>2</sup> *Begum*, who keeps a salon of entertainment and amusement for the sparks of a northern city, and who stands well with the police and the world at large. Comely of person still, if over-portly after a life of some adventure, twenty years ago she was a slip of a lass who danced for old Ma Tara Bhai in Lucknow, where she took the fancy of a young Afghan trader who then and there bargained for her and took her fancy too. She went with him to Kabul and Kandahar in a cart

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XII. Pipe and Tabor.

<sup>2</sup> Hamesha Behar: "always springtime".

with crimson curtains as far as Jalalabad, and thence in a camel *khajawah*. Ten years had she succeeded in ruling masterful young Afghans with normal tastes and had succeeded in knowing a good deal of the Kabul world. Incidentally she had found a little extra pocket money in supplying an Indian secret service agent with Afghan inner news, and with a good few jewels, had eventually returned to India sailing from Karachi to Bombay. There she picked up an elderly *Borah*, a Moslem merchant, who had appreciated her slightly burly charms. Five years had she danced for his pleasure and saved at his expense, escaping up country when someone had tried to knife her from jealousy. Now she is making a very comfortable income, thank you. Her secret work enabled her to get the favour of the police and a very valuable agent they found her. Discreet and silent as the grave, she had seen enough of the world to know that the best of treatment paid. The very best *huqa* tobacco only did she purvey, the best scents and the best rose-water in the *huqas*. Her girls were contented and happy and she would have no disease, with the result that her salon was not unjustly as such things go, in high repute in the city of Runjhithpura.

We will take leave first to pay her a visit about noon, when the early summer makes the coolth of the shady side of the bazaar acceptable, and when the glare is desirable by the contrast it confers on the shade. We will turn down off the highway, by the great tank in which people bathe and water carriers fill their leather water bags for road flushing, and if truth be told, sometimes for drinking. The *shisham* tree, the *Dalbergia Sisu* is in flower and very sweet, like the limes, and a bullock is turning a Persian wheel from which the drone of the great wooden axle is intensely soothing and satisfying, and the trickle and drip of

the water from the earthen pots on the endless chain peculiarly refreshing. In a serai a dozen Kabuli horses for the polo market are munching the young green wheat that cools and cleanses, and puts the useless butter fat on the rump to make them saleable to very young officers. A string of camels is resting in the yard, camels that are on their way back to Kabul with the ready-made frock-coats in the bales to sell to Afghan gentry.

The house of the *Begum* stands high above the Agha Serai by the holy tank and bathing ghat of Puran-Bhagat. From its latticed verandas you can look into the famous *Serai* and watch the Bactrian camels bubble and simper, and the "Persian pussy cats spit on the bales," and can beckon and give assignations to burly Ghilzais and Kabulis, who are however, probably looking for even more questionable entertainments among the eunuchs in woman's garments, for of such is the Afghan nature.

There is something of a breeze in the acacia trees and the seed pods that clatter like the women's tongues—that *chajna* that gives the trees their country name—are ripening fast. The mulberries are dropping their sickly fruits which even dogs and cats and horses are eating, and overhanging the well of the "lazily drowsily" wheel, is a big *beer* tree, the *ziziphus jujuba* whose fruit is so dear to Indian children, and there is an air of siesta which is full of charm.

From the large chamber within the darkened lattices there comes the luring throb of the little drum, that curious disturbing amorous noise which is made by finger and thumb bole, and there comes also with it the haunting, almost unclean, lilt of pipe, pipe and tabor . . . tabor and pipe . . . for jingling ankles to shuffle to. Already there are half a dozen men or so reclining on the cushions, and their pet *huqas* are being

filled. Alahdad Khan, the artilleryman from Jammu State, always a lucrative patron, likes a dash of musk in the rose-water, and Mira Bhai the witch with the big almond eyes and the lashes like a panther's whiskers, is filling it for him. When that is done he will be ready to hear all the gossip of British India. Faiz-ullah too is there, and he likes the heavy rich *champak* scent before he becomes friendly . . . you Tara . . . see that he gets it and be sharp about it, my girls! Hamesha Behar's eyes are quick to oversee her guests and their requirements. A couple of Sikhs are sitting in the corner, they are in town for the cattle fair and will drink hard later, which will be good for trade. There is a sucking lawyer, too, who would be better watching small causes than coming here, save that the courts are in recess, and the smart-looking Moslem in the corner looks like a soldier from a cavalry regiment, as a matter of fact a Mohammedan Rajput from the Canal colony, a class somewhat given to venery—as Francis Bacon has told us—to women, but being a good son of the Prophet, not to wine. The drum throbs now and again and the zithar twangs with a haunting long drawn plaintive note, the note of longing which is appropriate to this stage of the entertainment. Just within one of the inner rooms where the velvety cushions are super-velvety, Azizun the dancer taps the floor quietly with her embroidered crimson and green shoe to supple the sinews, keeping time to the tap of the little drum. An oleograph of Edward VIIth hangs on the wall and three little oil lamps flicker below in respectful adoration. King Edward is a popular picture in such salons, perhaps because in addition to being Emperor, he had the reputation of being a very proper man and knowing what was what. He is always in full military uniform, except in the seaports, where he is usually an Admiral-of-the-Fleet, but a little cut out

nowadays along the coasts by his son, in the suitable costume of an Admiral-of-the-Fleet also, like the Zamorin of Calicut and the Siddis of Jehangira admirals to the Great Moguls.

Seeing that all were comfortably disposed with their *hugas* a-bubbling, Hamesha Behar glides in to a crimson cushion in the centre to lead the day's gossip as was her wont. "Did anyone go to Rajah Ram Singh's wedding?" hazarded she.

"I did," said one of the girls, "He married two sisters at a time. Rather embarrassing I call it."

"Hu!" laughed a man, and the girls chuckled.

"They say that the Viceroy is coming to Lahore. That will set *tanshas* going."

"Hee, hee!" giggles one of the girls, "what about a *nautch*, he should see Azizun here," and Azizun tinkled into a titter.

"Nothing is much good now," said the Begum whose guerdon from the police included something for propaganda, "but they say the Moslem cloth merchants will present a petition. They can't get cloth from England from the Hindu importing houses in Bombay."

"*La, la!*" what is the Sirkar doing that it allows such matters! They ought to let my regiment ride through the Bombay markets."

This was little more than the lawyer lad would admit, he being one of those who from congenital sourness would run behind the Gandhi wagon without actually climbing there in.

"You are slave of governing classes *Resaldarji*."

*Ressaldarji* made as if to rise.

Hamesha Behar would have no quarrelling that might bring the police, and she had already given the police *havildar* more than was his just due, so she clapped her hands and pipe and tabor started more

definitely and Azizun slithered in with castanets on her hands and a gross of bangles on ankles and wrists. She is one of the good dancers of the city who for many years, has kept young noblemen in thrall, and is now partner with Hamesha Behar. We need not follow her story but folk in the dancing profession said she had been bought in Kabul bazaar by a Turki slave dealer and brought up to the profession. Entirely disowned and outcaste yet exceedingly profitable to those who owned her, she had been these ten years past "on her own," and had a troop of girls at her heels. She had a disciplined troop of the best dancers from Kashmir all thrice outcaste, bought from the criminal tribes and what not, disowned and flouted in respectable circles, yet they flourished ephemerally as flourishes the red agaric. The floor of the big room was of cement and took the jingle well, as Azizun slipped on behind her four girls. Half a dozen more clients have come in for the non-stop entertainment, and were served also with *hugas* and sherbets and given soft seats along the walls.

As the sherbets circulate Azizun and her maids glide on to the Persian carpets and stand jingling their ankle bells before their admiring clientele. And with them also come the makers of sweet music, retainers of Azizun also, chosen for their understanding of the more languid and amorous tones of the pipe and zithar. Three of them shuffle up behind the fairies, the man with the *dole* or tabor leading, a grey-bearded old *habitué* of the cities of the north, well practised to throb the drum exactly when most effective. The other two are younger musicians, the piper with a ragged unkempt beard and a black reed pipe, and the man with the zithar clean-shaven, with eyes deeply lined with cosmetic of a vacuous and unclean leer. Wholly unclean, wholly lecherous and loathsome all three, but permissible in that they understand their art to

perfection. And that art is the making of haunting seductive and amorous music, that all the world for its sins, could understand.

Then commenced one of those swaying insinuating *nautches* which to the English mind are often wholly unintelligible, but to the Eastern are fraught with all the love, passion, lust and high-drawn suggestion that ever Persian poet dreamed of. And the dance tells a story, commencing with the loneliness of a young captain ever condemned to frontier guard, longing for the scented delights of the city bazaar. And ever his desire grows, and ever the rocks of the frontier pall, till some errand leads him cityward to woo some beauty frail beneath whose windows, however, he sings in vain. And then despair and frenzy seize him when lo ! a rival fair appears and casts a lure at first unheeded, yet ever more and more potent till, at last, the lover begins to feel the spell of the entrancing provoker. Then as the fire leaps to new fuel, the inclination of the absconding soldier becomes fiercer and more ardent, and the charmer ever more compelling, till he gives himself body and soul to the personified goddess of incarnation.

The dancers elaborately and sinuously dance their interpretation of the story, swaying slowly with eyes closed, and balanced arms, as the despair of the captain is depicted, changing to the motion of a hurrying serpent, and the violence of love defeated. Clash go the castanets and loud throbs the *dole*, and then as the despair is greatest come the slow insinuating motions of the new enchantress. Ever the *spielman* pipes and the zithar twangs, and you can see every muscle under the soft olive skin of the bare abdomens and the transparent muslins of the dancers. Azizun leads the motions as fugleman with arm and ankle and bosoms moving to the pipe, now in softness, now in frenzy.

That it is all very high class performing is evident from the intense gaze of the onlookers, male and female, and the low sounds of approbation, Azizun is undoubtedly an artist of the very first grade with a figure beyond compare and yet of all those who looked, not one would have had a thought that this gifted creature was in any sort a human being with any claim to the ordinary heritage of the human race. Any existence beyond that of the butterfly would have been denied to her in the opinion of each and every male, flotsam and jetsam, the foam on the sea-shore !

With a clap of Azizun's hands the music ceased, the girls glide away and the musicians shuffle after them, amid Wah, Wah ! and *shabash* ! from the onlookers.

Undoubtedly, the Begum and her dancers had provided very good entertainment and handsome would be the *douceurs* in the tray by the door.

The visitors settle down to finish their *hugas*, and the girls to twitter by their side. One or two might stay in the recesses where the *chirags* flickered, but most would go about their business, their day's gossip and social relaxation over. In the evening some might return, and some lured by soft arms and eyes retire behind the heavy curtains, amid the smell of musk and sandalwood. It is in the scents perhaps that the allure lies strongest on the imagination. In any case, it will be best for us to take our leave.

#### VENERY AND TRAGEDY

Apart from such romance and glamour as may perchance appertain to such high grade salons as that of the Begum Hamesha Behar, where sordidness is hidden by skill in entertaining, and by art of dance



and music, the lower venery of India is fraught with dire consequences. In hardly any country in the world is the syphilis taint so strong, and there is many an outwardly magnificent old hidalgo who can only be described as "poxed up to the eyes" nor does anyone outside the sanitary authorities of the British Government of India care to remedy it. Congenital blindness especially, of which there is far too much, derives therefrom.

Because this was so, and because not only the British soldier, but those yet unborn of him, needed protection, the authorities in days gone by endeavoured to save our young men from themselves. In old and ruder days the only method that seemed feasible was an establishment of regimental women. Certain professional prostitutes were invited to attach themselves to regimental bazaars, commit themselves to the beneficent medical care of authority, and generally conduct themselves with propriety. This flourished till some years after the Indian Mutiny, and however unethical it might seem, was almost the only way out of the trouble, though as a matter of fact, it was by no means too successful since the roaming habits of the soldiery defeated its end.

It rose to a scandal in foolish eyes when a demand from a quartermaster, the responsible authority, to a local city magistrate to call for volunteers to join the establishment, became public with the added remark "better looking ones this time, please." Then Exeter Hall succeeded in lending a cruel hand, getting a finger in the pie at a time when its influence was at its worst and condemning English lads to syphilis run riot. For twenty years the drafts of invalid soldiers were in a terrible state and a dire scandal and argue as you will, denounce what you like, you cannot get away from the fact that a proportion of our young men

will not be continent. Because of the horror that the result of this cruel madness in England educated, regimental authorities very properly endeavoured and did get behind the orders of Government, orders issued in the days of a strong Conservative Government which should have had more character. It is not too much to say that by their pusillanimous conduct they have added a syphilitic strain to thousands of innocent folk in Great Britain. Even the good and great Commander-in-Chief, who had winked at this attempt to save his men, funked, and went as near lying as a man of his character should do, losing something of the regard of the army thereby.

As the years rolled on, and the horrors of the Exeter Hall influence was realized, military authority affected a very proper compromise. They knew that scores of women would haunt the country near cantonments unless some arrangement were made. They enacted that no loose women should be allowed to reside in what was known as cantonment bazaars, unless they voluntarily submitted to medical care. This they eagerly did, for no professional courtesan has the least desire to ruin her own health and that of her clients if she can help it. The authorities saw to it that to get to those parts of the bazaar, meant a considerable walk for the soldiery who would also have to go to the trouble of dressing themselves properly to walk out. Those who were not conspicuously incontinent were under no temptation, while those who went had the use of ablution chambers. These measures and those of instruction, plenty of healthy games and amusements and other uplifting methods brought army venery and also disease to a respectably low level. Then unfortunately, during the World War, a Commander-in-Chief so strong and so commonsense in most of his doings, was got at by the more foolish

feminine and ecclesiastical influence. The beneficent arrangements which, while protecting the individual, made the frequenting of the bazaars none too easy, was done away with at a time when the territorial troops were in India. A foolish manifesto was issued from certain quarters expressing regret that European soldiers should so abuse Indian women, that made the authorities a laughing stock before both the European and Indian world. Never at any time had there been the least question or complaint that respectable women were in any way molested. The British soldier has always been most scrupulous in his conduct in this respect. His recourse has but been to the professional racial courtesan whose strange hereditary existence has been explained.

The results were as ridiculous as anyone acquainted with the problem could have predicted. The environs of barracks became the haunt of loose women of the type so well known in Ireland in days gone by as the "Curragh Wrens". They were in the bushes and thickets o' night and their pimp men haunted the road to show the soldiers where to find them, and the evil was brought close to the barracks. The author, shortly after becoming Quarter-master General in India, walking near in one of our largest cantonment barracks himself after dark, found an anxious gentleman accosting him with alluring descriptions of the beauty awaiting him in a neighbouring thicket. There is only one solution of this problem—allow the professional women to ply their business in such safety as possible, entreated humanly, and placed as remote from those who do not really want them, as possible.

That women so entreated do attain a curious self-respect of their own in India, is evinced by the petition of a lady of this character to a distinguished general commanding a large district :

Honoured Sir,

For fifteen years I have been British soldier's woman, and no one ever finding fault with me. Now that bazaar sergeant is accusing me of impurity. If your Honour will stop this injustice I shall ever pay for your prosperity.

Ever your honour's faithful prostitute,

HABIBA.

What she meant was that she was being falsely accused of communicating disease. It is to the honour of that commander concerned that he took trouble to ascertain that she was being unjustly accused and saw that she was not molested, in the performance of what after the manner of the East, she considered her role in life and her duty towards mankind, for "the Magdalene may yet embrace the foot of the Jasper throne."

Now that in Britain we do protect our young people, and are prepared to mitigate the lot of our public women, it is to be hoped that never will false sentiment and dangerous misunderstanding be allowed to jeopardize our soldiery, who, as has been said, are given so much athletic training and so many interests as to win them as far as possible from the questionable occupations.

Under the less efficient form of Indian administration that is coming about, there will be little hope of the alleviation of the taint of venereal disease that does unfortunately wreak such havoc among the Indians themselves.

## CHAPTER V

### TEMPLES AND TEMPLE WAYS

CONCERNING TEMPLES—LINGAM-YONI—SPRING-FRET—TEMPLE DANCING GIRLS—HARAMUKH AND AMARNATH

#### CONCERNING TEMPLES

INDIA is the land of countless temples, pagodas, mosques and shrines, but in this chapter we are dealing not with the austere beauty of a Moslem mosque and shrine nor with the pagodas of those who follow the teaching of Buddha, but certain of the temples of the Hindu. The temples of the Hindu teaching lie north, south, east, and west, the length and breadth of the land, and they are of every material from the fossilized stone that you find on the Indus and at the *Kafir Kot*<sup>1</sup> of Rajah Bil, to the marbles of Jeypore, and to the sandstones and limestones of the south and west. The feature of most of the temples is the spire, the single spire to heaven like to a Christian church, which stands over the shrine and the idol, or sacred image. We need not dwell on the innumerable cults and gods and patron saints in whose honour a shrine may exist. It may be to either Vishnu or Siva according to which of the aspects of life and the God-head it is devoted, or it may be to many of the lesser Dravidian Gods which Brahaminism has admitted as coming within the shade of the Hindu umbrella, as manifestations and incarnations.

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<sup>1</sup> Kafir Kot : castle of the unbelievers.

But whereas in a Moslem mosque, you will see perhaps precious stones inlaid in floral patterns or most superb marble tracery, you will see no presentment of any living, human, or anthropomorphic figure. The idea of connecting anything animate with the worship of Allah is so repugnant that the Moslem invaders destroyed tens of thousands of the, to them, idolatrous temples. These temples, the temples of the Hindus, are always superbly ornate with lush carvings of the God heroes and their adventures on earth, their huntings and their amours. In all cases are the luxurious habits of the god and the Hindu conception of life that lies so close to fecundity, freely depicted. Ample are the female figures that stand in partnership, in adoration, or dancing before the gods, be they the temple dancers rejoicing, or the milkmaids dancing for Krishna, the brides of Rama, or merely the females who adore the male, whose claim to this adoration is his power over the keys of life.

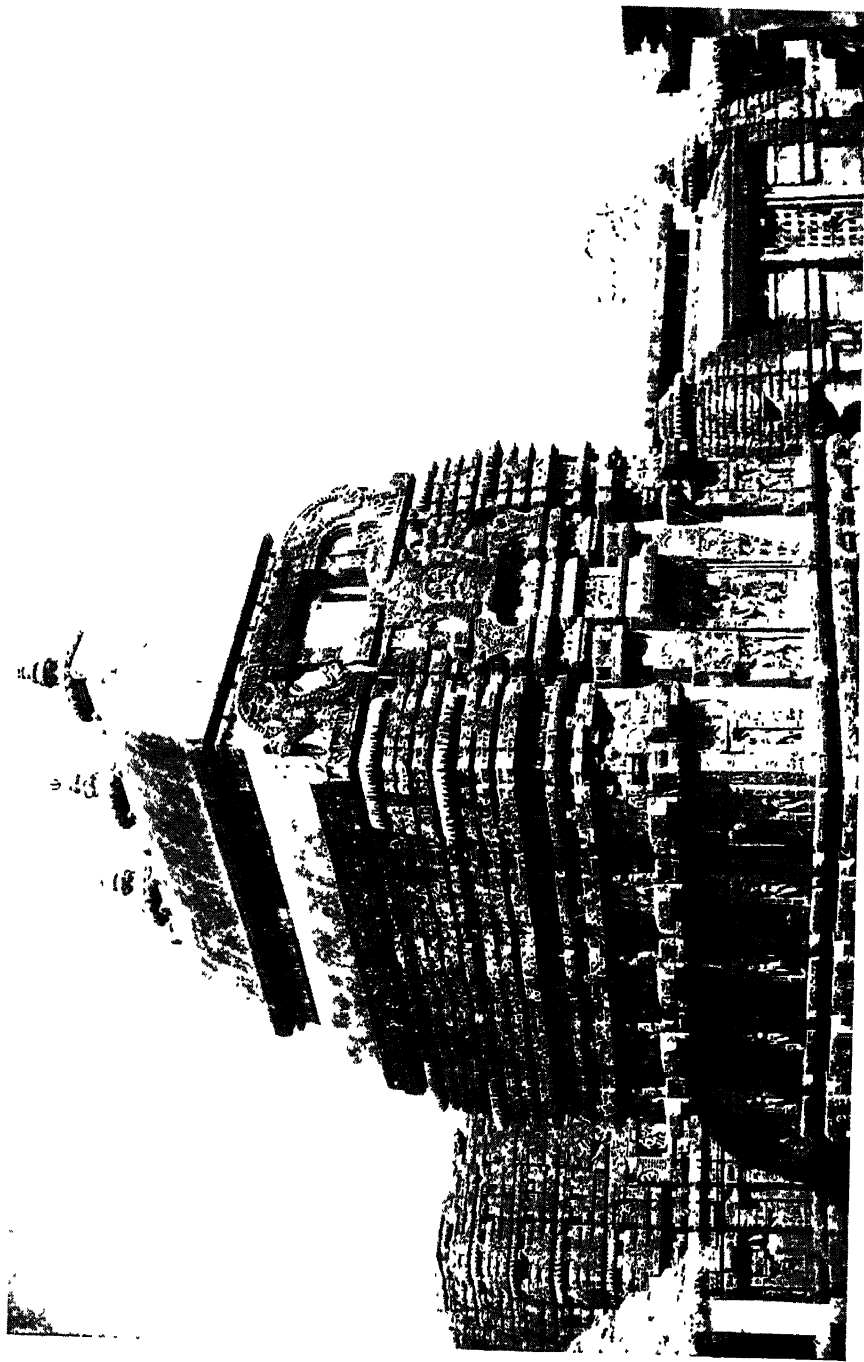
The dancing images are roundabout and comely, and almost always are curves the fashion, for the breasts are like towers as of the Shulamite and the Rose of Sharon. Great must have been the company of the carvers to have made the astounding reliefs in Ellora in Elephant and Ajunta, but it is not these and the lush females who dance on their portals with which this chapter is concerned, but rather those of stranger contents, as dealing with the cults of eroticism that lies beneath the surface of certain aspects of Hinduism. Many temples there are to which for instance, it would not be possible to take European ladies, though in these altered days they would perhaps go, could they go alone, just as in Pompeii do Italian guides draw the men of the party aside to the woman's annoyance, to view some astounding classic indecency. Certain, nay many, Indian temples contain carvings and sculptures of an indecency

that to Western eyes is astounding. It has been said that the continuation of the world, the procreation of a body so that a soul may work out its *Karma*, is the absorbing duty of man and woman in Hindu life. Not only is it so, but it is enjoined on every child, every Hindu lass dreams of the day when she shall be all in all to a husband and a husband to her, and together they shall unite in the mysterious joy of procreation.

Because that is so, anything and everything that deals with sex procreation union and human passion is worshipped and glorified, and to the purer minds this is nothing but allegory, and is devoid of grossness. But men and women are not pure, and to the lesser spirits and minds the cults can be very lascivious. So much is this so, that equal reverence is given to every manifestation of human amative concupiscence and the temples think nothing of reverencing and displaying scenes not only of homo-sexuality and its opposite, but even of bestiality. Scenes in which man and beast are linked is a common feature in certain temples, not in the dark corners, but on the outside carvings. There is a well known figure of which reproductions are made and sold in Lucknow of an elephant composed entirely of the intertwined human figures of all ages interwoven in copulation, of which the trunk is an ecstatic woman with white hair.

When we come to the obscenities of perversion and bestiality the ground is not covered by the aphorism, that what is not wrong in itself may be depicted and spoken of without wrong. It is one of the great accusations of Brahminism both in the past and in the present that such excesses and abominations are not only permitted but encouraged, and the world as a whole does not accept the excuse of imagery allegory and warning that Hindu philosophy urges in excuse.

At Puri, at the Black Pagoda away up near the sands



A HINDU TEMPLE WITH CARVINGS OF DANCING GIRLS AND DEVADASIS  
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on the Bay of Bengal, down among the Gopirams of the semi-Hinduized Dravidians, the temple obscenities vie one with another of which Lyall has sung :

“As the organs of birth and the circlet of Bones  
And the loose loves carved on the Temple stones.”

And Lawrence Hope has it :

“An elephant hunt, a magicians feast,  
And curious matings of man and beast.”

The Phallic temple of Jaganath the Hindu Lord of the World is among the most famous of the Indecencies, and the Temple of the Lion to which you enter the shrine by purification after passing unmoved through atrociously seductive carvings, and if need be are ministered too, *en route*, and purged of worldly desire, by *devadasis*, the sacred temple dancing girls and light o' loves. But it is at the Temple of the Sun at Kanarak the Black Pagoda, aforesaid, now long abandoned that the carvings are the most astounding. It was built about the thirteenth century and was probably abandoned through some Moslem defilement. No European ladies names grace the visitors' book in the Government travellers bungalow hard by; if they come they keep it quiet and lie doggo. All the improprieties, lascivities and intertwinings referred to are to be seen here as on the great temples and Gopirams in Madras. If the meaning of them is a warning against defilement and if they be of the nature of gargoyles, as some would have it, there is no more to be said, but they to our eyes, indecent beyond compare and belief. It is however, to be remarked that within is a holy calm, that the foulness lies outside, and anyone awaiting outside St. Peter's in Rome might find his eyes arrested by similar if not so obtrusive warnings of what went on without the holy circle of believers.

## LINGAM—YONI

Things being in the Hindu philosophy as described, it is not to be wondered at that the representation of the male and female organs of reproduction, of Siva and Parbatti, should be among the most popular and most treasured of household gods. The common little altar seen often in stone and frequently in brass in Hindu houses represents the *lingam*, the male organ in erection standing within a *yoni* and female organ, and this receives the offerings, libations, and adorations of the honourable women of India. Wives and mothers are they before all worlds and before all else. The first signs of male virility is welcomed in the nursery and the coming of a maid to puberty is the occasion of a religious ceremony. Were this always regarded as a sign of the sacredness of the day spring as no doubt intended, it could be only the subject of respect from the West, but with the reservation that so far as East and West go in this respect "never the twain shall meet".

The *Lingam-yoni* emblem either life-like or conventional is to be seen in every temple and everyone of all ages recognizes them and is content. The *Gao-muhk*, and "Bubbling well" the subject of one of Kipling's stories is really the *Gao-vulva* whence pours the life-giving and sin-purging liquor, the urine of a cow.

The typical non-realistic emblem of the *Lingam-yoni* or *-pithi* is the intertwined triangles which we know in the West as the "Seal of David". The triangle on its base is the male symbol and that on its apex the female.

The holiness of the *cowrie* shell which is always tenderable as small currency, lies in its shape, the rounded side male and the curled opening on the under side female. This significance even enters

harmlessly into games. The betrothed boy and girl will throw a handful into the air and if more fall with the *pithi* upwards then will the female influence predominate when the two come to keep house together. It is the story of the Celtic, the *Coq* and the *Cwym*, the hump and the hollow, which have remained so curiously in the Anglo-Saxon tongue as indelicate slang.

So popular is this imagery in the East that at Malabar in Bombay a great cleft in the rock is known as *The Yoni*, and through it pass barren women desirous of child who travel from far and wide to do so, assisted perhaps by the allotted priestly deputies of Mahadeo. And in marvelling we must realize how revered and sacred is the task of the preservation of the people on "this strange old earth", remembering the countless souls that lie awaiting re-birth at the instance of a man and woman.

Here too, must be said a word of *Sakti* or *Shakti*, the worship of the female principle which is sometimes carried to such excess as should entrance the advanced feminist cranks of the West. To every deity of the Hindu belief but primarily to the two great *personna* or different aspects of the Universal Godhead Siva and Vishnu, is a female counterpart who in theory, but represents feminine side of life and order.

Siva or Shiva also known as Mahadeo the Great God, is Lord of Life and Death and procreation, and war and love and pestilence, of joy and of grief. There are obviously certain aspects of these phases and phenomena that can be called feminine. Vishnu represents the softer side of God's Universe, where horrors and griefs are disregarded and the gentler, simpler side of life controlled. Here again is there room for the special reverence of the feminine side of life. But because Hinduism lives in imagery, imaginative as well as gross, the gods are represented often by statues

which would be known in scientific language as Hermaphrodite, the combination of Hermes and Aphrodite, the male and the female ; in the statues the figures have the left breast female and the dual organs are depicted below, the male "couched".

Therefore also it must be that certain of the worshippers of Siva and Vishnu direct their attention to the *Sakti*, the female virtues and preferences, and are in duty bound compelled to do this by imagery. *Saktas* however, are divided into two classes known as right- and left-handed *Saktas*. Right-handed *Saktas* worship the naked female form in picture and image especially and the more honourable and decorous side of sex life. Their symbolism is complete as indicating in no feeble way their reverence for all that is feminine but it is to a great extent, decorous. Left-handed *Saktism* however, is far otherwise, and is conducted very much in secret. The number of its votaries is considerable and many belong to this form of the cult who would not blazon the fact abroad. The left-handed *Saktism*, the nude female figure is the object of veneration, by both sexes, usually the wife of the priest and the *pithi* or *yoni* and all it stands for in facts as well as in allegory the centre of attention. The meetings are accompanied with intense ecstatic orgies, in which the carvings of the obscene temples are faithfully represented. The freest unions take place, devoid of the scruples of caste or blood relationship. In man and woman's lust are represented Siva and his spouse Durga in union. Orgies thus indulged in enable the partakers to cross the regions of darkness to actual union with the mighty Siva. While more sedate Hindus profess to look on left-handed *Saktism* with some disfavour it would be impossible to say whether or no the most reputable of Hindus was or was not a votary.

In this cult as indeed in Hinduism generally, no exercise in venery could be ruled out as wrong in that it all shows tribute to the worship of the Creator of Eternity and the need for providing some form in which *Karma* may continue.

The great and popular feast of the *Holi* is one in which complete license may be permitted once a year. Men celebrating may make the most indecent and indelicate remarks and proposals to women, all in reverence to the great human principle of life. It resembles in principle those festivals of Venus, Ashtaroth and Aphrodite when the most virtuous were enjoined and expected to give themselves to strangers, perhaps in its origin, to impress on them their humbleness before the deity.

It would not however, be fair to say that the results of this cult and the Hindu outlook on the matter are demoralizing for women. Rather is it the contrary. Young women from their earliest days look eagerly forward to the marital relations but with awe and reverence as well as anticipation, and their desire in life is towards their husbands and to bear him children, in honour and in righteousness. The women of India growing up under this atmosphere are less the compendium of the most revered of womanly qualities. It is the coarser male nature probably that suffers thereby, and the early marriage that the system engenders is terribly reflected in its effects on erotic young students, the husbands of ardent and honourable young wives, whose attentions do not always conduce to the passing of matriculations. Also is their erotic hot-house nature stimulated by the continental press, who pour into India highly-coloured and illustrated romances, which the lads eagerly read. The result is evident in the needs of the people, for the Indian press which, as a rule, has a trivial circulation, makes its

money by the advertisements of Aphrodisiacs. The advertisement columns of even the more reputable sheets would astound the British reader. The various remedies and stimulants are suited to all purposes and purses and the pills offered to "*chieves*" (sic) are invariably advertised as encased in gold. It is because of its aphrodisiac value that the smuggling of cocaine is so popular though it pleased Mr. Gandhi in his poison campaign in London to say that cocaine was one of the evils that Britain insisted in forcing on India to increase her revenues.

Something of what life and fecundity means to the women of India is depicted in the following scene, set in Kashmir, which, though the mass of the people have been Moslem these five hundred years and more, is the home of Brahmin learning and the Brahmin race who escaped the circumcizing knife. It is a spring-time festival when the sap of fertility is active in the veins of all nature, and the lawful "springfret" lies compellingly on the sexes.

#### SPRINGFRET

Over the lake and along the canal had come the boats, full of women swathed in veils, silent save for the muffled strokes of the boatmen at the paddles, and the mutter of the waters under the prows. Women were flocking to the great female festival of spring and fecundity, the world was awakening from its winter and since man's soul may go from human to beast and from beast to plant in working out his destiny and expiating his *karma*, all that means life is sacred and pregnant. The women went to worship *en masse* at the fount of fertility. By water and by road in little curtained bullock carts, the crowd grew and grew. The *chajna*, the clatter of women's tongues, was still. And the occasion solemn beyond description.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

In the temple, hundreds of women sat packed in the darkness, before the high mass of an image carved in black basalt, before which now and again into a great brass basket of embers a priest threw something that made the fire leap for a moment in sensuous flames, lighting up for a moment the carving on the rock, the outline of the image, the glistening drops that shone on its head from some drip above, and the loose loves carved on the stones. A chant that was almost a dirge came from the dark recesses and now and again a drum throbbed, throbbed to the urge for life and fecundity that was slowly rising in the psychology of that great mass of worshippers. Siva Mahadeo, the Great God, the God of Life and Death, the God of worldings, of mothers in childbirth, of merrymakers on their rounds, each to each and all to all. Now high, now low, rose and fell the chant and the multitude bowed in unison. More insistent grew the drum and more expressive of that desire that sees to it that the world shall continue. Man must hurry through his carnal lives, so that a soul may work up its way to salvation, or fall to hell and start again, on the slippery path of reincarnation. Again the flames leapt and a conch brayed, and the chant now dwelt on the duty of every woman to conceive in joy and people the world, and the mass of bowed figures seemed to emanate response. Through the gloom the eyes of those who dared to look could see the scenes and emblems and allegories of fertility carved on the dim reeking walls of stone.

"I am the God of the sensuous fire,  
That moulds all nature in form divine,  
The symbols of death and of man's desire,  
The springs of change in the world are mine."

\*     \*     \*     \*

Outside, out from the gloom and the scent of the



incense of sandal and champak and samphire, out from the oppression of a thousand throbbing as one, a girl supported by an elder woman sobbed and gasped, half-carried, through a wicket to cook green turf on the waters bank hard by. As the girl collapsed on the grass, came up a figure in pale saffron dress, a figure with a face that bore the marks of peace of a road untold, even the Peace of God which passeth all understanding. The Swami Sri Ananda paused and passed his hand in front of the maid.

“Daughters, what seek ye here?”

“We seek coolth and rest. My daughter-in-law is overcome in the temple *Baba*! I want quiet and rest for her.”

“Rest and quiet she shall have and the blessing of Indra. See!” and he drew them, the younger now somewhat recovered, to a shrine hard by. “See! All is cool and peaceful. See the brow of Indra. Peace! Peace on a road untold.”

“And the burden of thought and the travail of care,  
Weigh down the soul in its wandering flight.”

“All are gone in the dreamless night.” And the image of Indra smiled as the Swami smiled, free of all care and full of all confidence.

“And the temple whence we have come?” And as she spoke the faint throb of a drum in the interior seemed to come through the mulberry grove, the pale sheen of the spring dress of the trees and the soft sighing of the wind in the boughs, seemed an answer.

“Temples and God’s, daughter, temples and Gods? One in all and all in one. There are Gods no more, but their spells remain.”

“Ye have courted them vainly with passion and prayer,  
Ye shall live by knowledge and peace and love.”

\* \* \* \* \*

And as this fades from the scene, let us gaze on one more where the age-old search for peace and release from the world's care is depicted, still to be seen in Kashmir and amid the eternal snows of the Himalaya.

## TO HARAMUKH AND AMARNATH

### TEMPLE DANCING GIRLS

Reference has already been made to the temple women of the ancient faiths, and the existence of such to-day in the Hindu system. That they were a greater feature in the past and intensely popular seems to be established by the figures of well developed dancers that almost without exception grace the temple carvings. There are several temples in India still famous for these girls, yet there are hardly anywhere they would not be welcome in some form or other. *devadasis* or *murlis*, they might be decorously called in Scripture language those that "dance before the Lord" and this is one of their duties, as also is that of attending as a deaconness to the temple. But their important function is undoubtedly, as in the day of Ishtar and Ashtaroth, that of temple courtesan. Where the worship of *lingam* and *yoni* is enjoined as a tribute to the Creator and the spirit of eternity there the exercise of the procreative faculties is but a corollary, while their aid in purging the being temporarily of carnal desires is not to be neglected! A famous temple for such has long been that of Jejuri on a hill some miles from Poona in the Deccan where there have existed a large number of temple women known as *murlis*. From time to time westernized Hindu writers have protested against their existence as a scandal but no one holding the Hindu view of such things could be shocked. Protests of this kind are more

to aid in standing well before western civilization, than because of conviction. There can be no real horror of such institutions in the mind that holds the Hindu ethics. The temple dancer, the *devadasi* or *murli* is an honourable woman dedicated to her position. She may be the child of a *murli*, or she may be and often is the unwanted female child that most Hindu families can do without. To devote her thus in families of lesser caste is to ensure life and welfare, and not necessarily to incur odium.

In this matter of temple women, *dasa* and *dasi* meaning but a servant male or female, it is also to be realized that when children are ill it is not unusual to vow the next child to the temple service. *The Deva dasis* "handmaidens of the goddess" are of seven types according to the nature of their vows and contracts. Thus a *Vikrita* is one who has sold herself for her own advantage while a *Bhritya* has sold herself for her family's sake, and a *Bhakta* has joined from motives of devotion, *Sophikas Rudraganikas* are also those who have sold themselves outright. It is the *deva dasis* of lesser caste who marry the god.

The female *Basavi* are women of the Lingayat caste who are devotees, and wear a silver box round their neck containing a *lingam*. Their business is largely to attend marriage ceremonies, waive lighted lamps round bride and bridegroom, and they too act as courtesans in the spirit that so doing honours the Creator. *Basavis* are male as well as female however; In Marwar the sacred girls are known as *Bhagatani*, "The friends of the Holy man". (In Travancore they are known as *kuddi-kha* "those who belong to the house." It is on record that at Conjevaram temple alone in days gone by the temple courtesans numbered a hundred.

The famine child is often adopted the purpose,

to the horror of missionaries who have brought up so many of these lost humans. In famine times, now, thanks to British care and energy, almost a thing of the past, children, especially female children, are cast away, lost, abandoned. *Murlis* themselves will pick up and educate such, and by this chance some of the temple dancing girls may have been Brahmins born, lost altogether and knowing little of their high origin save sometimes by reason of charm or amulet bound to their arms. The abandoned daughter and famine child indeed, is also one of the methods whereby the non-ecclesiastical courtesan may fill up her ranks. Children are adopted out of kindness and for companionship and are thus brought up to the profession, learning to dance and prink from their earliest days. Indeed in a world that spawns children, and whose souls are but carrying out someone's *karma*, who need wish it otherwise? Again is it evident what a strange unhappy spell Brahminical ethics have succeeded in binding on the Aryan cousins of we of Europe, and still more on the lesser people they have dominated. And yet when studying this strange system of which the motto is assuredly, "everything in its place and a place for everything", we are compelled to admire a priesthood who set themselves to blend and dominate a continent.

One alleviating reflection however, remains, that since the occupation is not held in dishonour, the woman lives in the public regard and will eventually retire endowed, or with her savings, to an honourable retirement.

An honourable status is always accorded the temple women by marriage to a god, a tree, and often to a sword. At Jejuri the *murlis* are married to the God Khandoba. In the marriage ceremony a talisman is often tied round their necks by a man of their own caste.

The romance, the zeal of a pilgrim host will now and again come to the notice of the European in India, as he strikes perchance on his way to a Himalayan shooting ground, and meets some portion of those who journey each year to the Abode of Snow, in the quest for salvation. As the would-be *Haji* flocks to Mecca, as the *Pelerine* tramps over the Persian plateaux bearing the dried remains of his relatives to the shrines and burial grounds of the *Kerbela precincts*, so but in far greater numbers flocks the Hindu to the shrines that bring him peace, deep set in the snows of the Himalaya. The mentality of the Hindu differs somewhat from that of the Moslem. The pilgrimage performed in the former case has not the same aspect of a trophy gained and an absolution secured, so much as that of a landmark on the way to peace, which shall help him to know the "Way", the way of peace and submission, and a signpost to the world to come. The West no longer speaks of the Hindu as an idolator, but knows that the uneducated man but worships the Almighty, in many forms and with many emblems, in a misty manner. Although the tribes adopted into Hinduism have brought their images with them, there is always a spiritual yearning with a vision of a life to come that saves even the meanest from being an idolator.

The sacred shrines at which the pilgrim seeks heart's ease, are often in the hills, and to get there he who would worship at them must go through difficulty and danger, through the Himalaya snows, or the cruel Afghan border to the Mountains of Solomon to which indeed both Hindu and Moslem resort. There is not enough merit in going to the great fairs at Hurdwar and Allahabad, since you can go by train. Does merit lie in such a journey? No! Deep into the mountains to where Holy Ganga and her sister the Jumna rise by the distant peaks of Jumnotri and

Gangotri, or through the outer Himalaya to the peak of Haramukh which overhangs the Wular Lake in far Kashmir, that is the way to merit and knowledge of the "Way".

Let us watch them coming up to Haramukh over mountain paths and glacier, by ruined fane and fort, by *deodar* and silver birch and scented juniper, with their ox and their ass, some riding, some tramping, father and son, mother and daughter, *un qui marche un qui tette, un qui vient*, encouraging each other as they go. "On brother on : the way is far but the merit great !" Out from the traders' booths and the peasants shacks, out from the plains over the snows and through the passes :

"Come brothers come, for the snows are far  
Come brothers come to the healing shrine  
Come brothers come for the peace that endures."

cry the priests to the swelling crowds. On through the Pîr Punjal or up the British cart road from the Punjab, rich and poor, prince and pauper, oh ! to know the "Way" and attain peace on a road untold. The men with their bundles tramp ahead and the women follow—those patient Indian women who daily keep the cottage vigil and say the cottage prayer as the West has almost forgotten to do, who daily do the uplifting of hands, for the men away at work—they trudge along with now and again a jest and never a murmur. Sometimes one falls by the way, with her time on her, and her man puts up a sheet as a screen and a covering, and in a few hours the sturdy mother with her new-born infant seeks the "Way" again. With the crowd come also pimp and pander, with japes and pipe and tabor, such as accompanied the palmers on their way to Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock, for crowds are human, are spoil to the plunderer and agape for

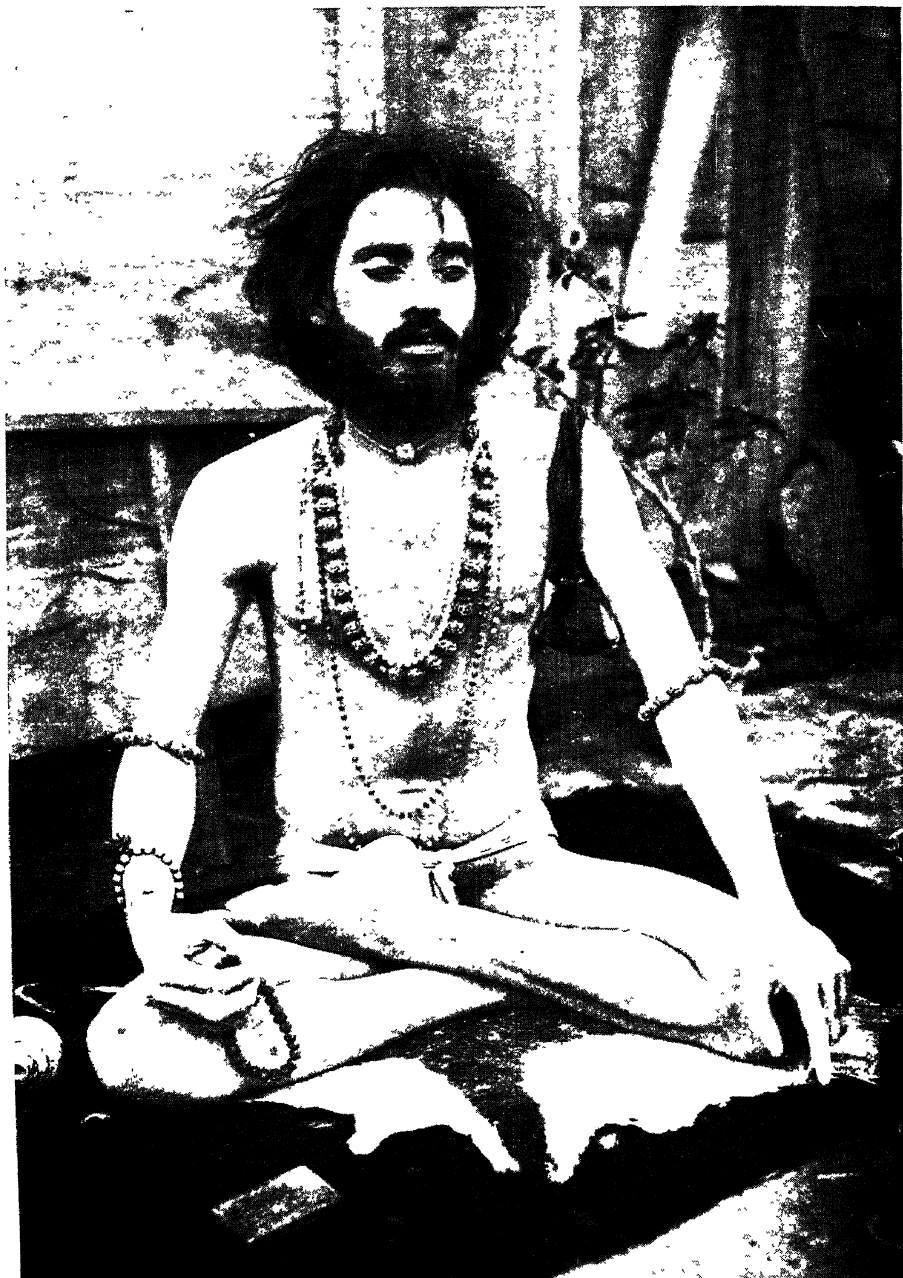
marvels. "Dance bear, dance !" cried the bearman, "*Nautcho Balu*," let the *Babas* laugh, for the road is long and little legs are tired. "Renounce the world ! Renounce the world !" calls the *Sannyassi*. Haste to the snows and the healing shrine ! And the wild thyme is bruised sweet and healing beneath the press on the Great *Karewa* as the crowd opens out to head for the road to Lake Gangabal, the mountain tarn whose depth no man can plumb. Thousands will climb and many will fall by the way, but to the shrine above, far above even the juniper, the crowds will eventually emerge on to the frozen snow, and many will feel that they have acquired that merit which shall lead them surely to the life of the world to come. Who shall say that pilgrimages are vain, even to the shrine of Siva ?

"The God of the sensuous fires,  
That moulds all nature in forms divine.

"For the circle of Life in its flower and its fall,  
Is the writing that runs on the temple wall."







ONE OF THE ASCETIC MENDICANTS  
with necklace of *Rudraksha berries*.

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot"

[To face page III]

## CHAPTER VI

# THE RELIGIOUS ASCETICS AND MENDICANTS

THE RELIGIOUS MENDICANTS—THE AUSTERITIES  
—THE PRINCIPAL MENDICANTS AND SECTS—  
STRANGE CULTS AND PRACTICES—THE BHATRIS

### THE RELIGIOUS MENDICANTS

THE religious mendicants are emphatically in many senses part of the underworld and unknown life of India, close on five million of whom roam the land, mostly, but not entirely, belonging to Hindu Orders and fraternities. With absolute freedom to go where they will, with access to all quarters, with fellow initiates in every town their powers of underground propaganda may be very great, and their power for evil serious. A small number of them are undoubtedly concerned in sedition and the murder cult, and any other movement of submersive cults. The main are harmless enough, but with such a layer, there is no roguery and no secret evil that it is not possible for them to put through. Equally potent however are these Orders as a machinery for Government secret service.

These five million Hindu ascetic mendicants roam the length and breadth of India, having renounced all possessions, and live, work- and care-free, on the generosity and holy instincts of the religiously minded. Who and what they are and the good and the evil of a system which encourages such vast numbers from

attempting any remunerative work in the community is not very generally understood. The European in India classes them under a few general names, *faqirs* (which they are not, as *faqir* is strictly a Moslem religious mendicant), *gosains*, *sadhus*, *sannyasins*, *jogis*, *bairagis* and the like.

The religious ascetics are mendicants bound by vows of renunciation, viz., *Gosains*, which means "Lord" or "master" of passion. The ascetics orders were originally only open to the Brahmins, they were later extended to the twice-born, and are, with a few exceptions, now open to men of any caste. There are a few women ascetics, *sadhvin* (feminine of *sadhu*), but the publicity of the life makes it unsuitable for them, and the number are few. Now and again some widow, weary of her life of drab restraint, becomes a mendicant.

The term "*sadhu*", which means simply "good", may be used as a convenient term for the whole class. All *sadhus* belong to one of the many religious orders entered under vows of renunciation of the world. All belong to and stay in various monasteries which have been erected by the pious through the ages. But monasteries are but their temporary habitats for their business is to roam the world, obtaining their subsistence from the charitable, and demonstrating to high and low before all worlds, that there is something else worth living for than worldly possessions and comfort. This object lesson they veritably perform, and do undoubtedly serve as a reminder of this cardinal fact.

The public receive them kindly and support them cheerfully. While many are earnest and genuine, some are impostors and time-servers. The public is perfectly well aware of those who are worthless, and those who are not, and while putting up with the faults and

weaknesses are cognizant and appreciative of their good points. Naturally the people are apt to grumble and make jokes at the number of hungry mendicants who push their bowls before them, but pay up nevertheless, lest they be cursed or fail to earn the blessing of the gods.

Most *sadhus* wear a dress of saffron yellow, a few sects have other colours. All carry a begging bowl made of a gourd or coco-nut or sometimes of brass, and carry also a waterpot and a staff. A pair of fire tongs is often carried to keep evil spirits away, and convey a coal to the pipe bowl, and a pestle and mortar for *bhang*, their besetting weakness. Some go naked and are known as *Digambaras* or "sky-clad", their bodies smeared with ashes, which serve to keep off insects from their bodies and demons from their souls, as well as serve as an emblem of their humility. All wear rosaries of beads which serve to remind them of prayers and mantras. It is said that the rosaries of Christians were adopted from them.

Most of the ascetic sects are followers of Siva, a far less number follow Vishnu. The Sivites wear a rosary of thirty-two or sixty-four berries, the well-known knobbly berry, of the *Rudrakshi* (*Eleocapu ganitri*) and the Vishnuvites of beads of the *tulasi*, the holy basil (*Ocymuni-sanctus*). Many *sadhus* wear also a necklace of human teeth, and a snakeskin round the neck. Their locks and face hair is usually unkempt and matted.

Most of the well-known teachers founded schools of mendicants who would go about and proclaim their teaching, and who are in fact begging friars welcome in households, and with many a Friar Tuck among them, despite their outwardly horrifying aspects. Their role as deputies in the service of fecundity is referred to later.

## THE AUSTERITIES

The foundation of these orders is, as has been said, renunciation, *sannyasin*, and all idea of holiness in Hindu thought is based on *tapas*, which not only achieves holiness, but gives power over nature and over occult things.

Siva himself practised relentless austerities for countless years, and his followers but copy him. The word *tapas*, "austerity", which really means "hot", and hence the heat from pain, has an interesting inner meaning for in addition to that penance, and asceticism also means "duty in that station of life", etc. For the Brahmin, *tapas* means teaching, for the Kshatryia or soldier class protection of the community, for the Vaisiva, carrying out the allotted daily task of business or agriculture, and for the Sudra service.

In addition to the act of renunciation and asceticism which in many sects means the renunciation of all desire and passion and involves celibacy, many tortures and rigours are involved. A well-known mortification is the couch of spikes on which the ascetic reclines. There is an authentic case of one *sadhu* who lay on one for over thirty years. Another well-known penance is to hold the arm over the head, till it is so stiff that it never can be lowered, and sometimes both arms are raised, which means that the *sadhu* can never feed himself. Nails uncut and curled like rams' horns is a popular culture. Swinging from steel hooks let into loops of flesh cut into the victims backs is also quite popular, and to be seen at festivals. All these severe penances and mortifications do not only bring intense feelings of satisfaction to the performer and the sure and certain belief of the genuineness of his salvation, but do further emphasize what has been referred to, that there are other things in life that count besides ease.

The general control over nerves that results from fasts and the mortification do, no doubt, provide some inherent callousness to physical pain, and thus assist the seeker for righteousness in the weakness of his body.

It is interesting to know that the terrible spiked bed aforesaid, is derived from the circumstances of death of Bhisma, the leader of the great Aryan clan of the Kurus who was slain with so many arrows through his body that they protruded behind like the spikes of the bed of penance and remembrance.

#### THE PRINCIPAL MENDICANTS AND SECTS

The sects of the *sadhus* are too numerous to describe in any detail, but some of the more usual ones may be given. They are distinct from the mere recluse. An ascetic or recluse, is usually called a *swami*, which means "lord", and is a term of courteous respect and reverence, that entirely suits the gentle appearance and wholly benevolent life that the true *swami* leads . . . the sort of person who is made to appear in the sketch in Chapter X. Mrs. Steel, in her wonderful study of the Indian Mutiny, *On the Face of the Waters*, draws one outside Delhi while the stramash of the siege is on, with great faithfulness. Through the ages men of presence and power and dominion have left the world in the East as in the West to seek God and meditate on His ways. There is a quaint story of a European at some place of pilgrimage in the Himalaya who had inadvertently let his impious shadow fall on the sacred aloof square of earth in which a recluse sat, eating his noontide meal. In disgust the Indian had risen and thrown down the hillside his food that was thus made untouchable, with an exclamation of horror. Then was he heard to say in English,

"Tutt ! Romesh Chander, why should you, once a scholar of Baliol be angry because that poor ignorant European has cast his shadow on you."

The great teachers of the past, Sankar-acharya, Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, all left sects behind them which remain, broken of course into sub-sects. But the majority of such are among the followers of Siva, and his fierce and bloody goddess Kali, who can also be sublime and benign, as the sea rages and storms and subsides. The seven principal Sivite sects are : the *Dandins*, *Sannyassin*, *Bramacharin*, *Paramahamsa*, *Lingyat*, *Aghorin* and *Yogin*.

The *Dandins*, so called from always carrying a *dand* or staff, are solely Brahmins, and are also called "*Dasnamah*" or "ten-names", from the ten principal disciples of Sankara. Their initiation includes a baptism, and the removal of the sacred thread of the twice-born.

The *Sannyassins* include seven sub-sects, and are open to all castes. Any initiate receives from the initiating *guru* his new name, the sacred *mantrum*, and is told the sub-sect to which he is posted.

The *Aghorins*, or *Aghora-panths*, are a strange sect, which is nearly dead, consisting of *sadhus* who have acquired a strange and repulsive appetite for the flesh of corpses, in fact, like their game high, and are reputed to steal corpses from burial grounds to satisfy it. Such a taste would be accepted as their peculiar methods of mortifying nature and showing their humility.

*Yogin*, or *Jogis*, is the name for all ascetics who practise *Yoga*, who endeavour by restraint or discipline to obtain union of the soul with the Supreme. They are mystics and self-hypnotizers, and claim peculiar powers which undoubtedly some possess. Their founder was one Gorakn-nath, a follower of

Mohendranath, of whom little is known. They are worshippers of Siva, disregard caste and normally live well.

The Vishuvite followers among the ascetics are rather wandering monks than mendicants. Among these are the followers of Ramamuja, who are termed *bairagin*, who must be free from all world desire and passion and are pledged to celibacy. This and all the ascetic orders are really immersed in salvation of self, and there is little of the desire to lead others on the holy path, or anything of the order of hospitaliers about them. They crowd to the pilgrims and great religious fairs, but never think of doing a hand's turn to help the helpless, and the needy. That is left to the wandering Christian priest, to the British Magistrate and police officer with his *conshtabils*, who are father and mother to countless crowds.

Now and again some European missionary or other attempts to be *sadhu* and *sannyassin*, to live among them, learn their spirit and gain their confidence. But try he never so earnestly it is apparently beyond the powers of his psychology. On the other hand, the Indian Christian to whom the mentality is inborn, does do so with success, gaining the affection and respect of those he meets. It is in this way that Christianity may come into its own.

The *Lingam* cult of Siva naturally finds its way among the *sadhus* who follow that worship. Not only do many like the *Lingavats* carry a *lingam* with them as sign and mascot, but they do so manipulate their poor person as by suture and what-not that their organs become afflicted with immense proportions, in the same way that some men's arms become fixed above them. In the popularity of *lingam* imagery such attributes add to their saintliness, and it is a matter of common gossip that women solicit their favours as a



stimulant to their fertility. Moreover, as has been said, when they arrive in villages barren women will bow down before them, handle and kiss their organ of fertility and invite them to deputize for Mahadeo (Siva), the great God who fertilizes the womb.

In the west of India there is a strange sect of praying beggars known as *Aradhis*, a mixed class recruited from Brahmins to *Mahars*, and curiously even from Moslems. Childless men whose hope of salvation is thus jeopardized, vow that if a male child be vouchsafed it shall be dedicated as an *Aradhi*. *Aradhins*, praying girls, are among them, who are devoted to a patron goddess and remain single, a most unusual state, for one would expect them to be at least married to something inanimate. The men of the sect are tall, thin and womanish, and many of them mortify the flesh by being made eunuchs. They go about in bands of four or five, with drums and the one-stringed fiddle known as a *tuntune*.

#### STRANGE CULTS AND PRACTICES

Among the genuine ascetics and recluses are strange practices that often take unusual and unseemly toll of the bodily functions, in activities for which they were never designed by nature. *Yoga*, the system of mind controlling matter, gives to its adepts powers which to ordinary mortals have a resemblance to the supernatural. There are various exercises and practices, some easy to do, others requiring much practice to acquire, which do undoubtedly stimulate the mind, re-act on the secretions, and sharpen the susceptibilities. Long periods of vacant thoughts acquired by practice, bring new ideas or allow the workings of the subconscious mind to come into play. Holding of breath and repeating of charms, *mantras*, texts and the like

with the breath thus held, alters blood pressure and similar conditions, with strange results. The hormones and ductless glands are affected by certain such happenings and new forces dormant in the body are allowed to come into play. Through the ages there have been minds and natures who have dabbled in such doings, and have discovered unknown faculties, and passed them on to pupils and initiates. Some of these give moral power and tone and improved reasoning, others may be harmful or produce results that nature did not intend to be used. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it," and the serpent said unto the woman: "God knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall bear God's knowing good and evil."

I make no doubt that powers of clairvoyancy can, and are to be obtained, and some capacity to detach the spirit, and to move into more than one "plane", to use the clairvoyants term, above that of the ordinary human faculties. How far such possibilities may run can be seen by anyone who will persist in making their minds a blank, for even a few minutes, and who will hold their breath and say the Lord's Prayer twice. To the ordinary Christian however, there is always the feeling that to make your mind a blank is to leave room for evil spirits to enter, and one of those strange possessions that may be so devastating.

There is, however, little doubt that the Indian ascetic does acquire powers, or develop certain powers latent in many of us. The many highly accredited stories of the foretelling of the future cannot all be false, so that clairvoyancy and also telepathy are both within their powers of acquisition.

In this matter of Yoga, the breathing exercises are carried out on a strongly developed system in which a peculiar rhythm is the main factor. The whole system

is known as *Pranayama*, the main branches are thus divided to assist in certain controls of the body.

<i>Pralyahana</i>	Nerve control.
<i>Dharana</i>	Mind control.
<i>Dhyana</i>	Control of meditation.

It is always said that the Jesuits have some knowledge of this acquired by Ignatius Loyala, from the Moslem mystics among the Moors.

<i>Nama-niyama</i>	Control of right thought.
<i>Asana</i>	Right positions, always important of the blood pressure.
<i>Kali-mudra</i>	Control of the self-induced trance.

The very faintest trace of such knowledge and power comes to us in the matter of deep breathing. Now and again someone writes to the press how deep breathing above its ordinary usefulness has cured the writer of this or that. It is the faint shadow of *Yoga* exercises. There is a shadow of it too, in the Kipling story when the gardener made the girl with a wasting disease cut a hazel stick twelve inches long to prop her window open with and repeat the names of the Twelve Apostles three times before the open window, three times a day, to cure her poor lungs.

But the West need not trouble itself about such things, for there be few among us, who have it in our own character and patience even to toy with such things let alone set down under a teacher to become an initiate. There is a pleasing inkling if it all in the chapters of *Bengal Lancer*, and references to such control of mind over matter as the power to protrude the whole of the long bowel and bring it back again, let us hope vastly better for the exercises. The real *Yogi* lives on the most trivial amount of food, and does





SADDHUS AT BENARES  
The meeting place of the religious mendicants

probably in reality attain these strange powers, though what it profits him is another matter. The East is drawn that way, the material West is not.

There are also practices which border on the obscene, which do perhaps give marvellous power of a kind. The Indian, and especially the Mongolian, has long realized that the greatest stimulant to the human frame and nerve comes when the sex functions are stimulated, and he designs to stir them and all their forces, and then divert them to other purposes. The day-spring stirred brings great exaltation, and in this exaltation mind and nerve may be worked on for special purpose, other than the legitimate demand on the Creator to fit a new soul into the body that man and woman propose to create, the which is a mystery. The ascetic has learnt to capture this mystery for other ends without apparent injury to his own frame, and through the ages has taken thought how to do so. The stimulation is even carried so far as the organism and the ejaculation of semen, which is then withdrawn into the body and reabsorbed into the physical system, while mind and nerve divert and mis-use the exaltation. This is practiced for many years, it is said, before the full power is acquired, and the re-absorption it is also said is practised with milk. Thus is the day-spring diverted from its purpose, and the good turned to evil. How far the female is able and taught to divert her own powers is not known to the outer world, though strange stories come from the nunneries of Tibet as from the lamaseries. By so much as female ecstasy surpasses male, the results may be enhanced. Indeed if the story of the medieval religious houses be studied, there is some indication of similar cults. The true nature of witchcraft in England is little known, but if as believed the witches but practised an age-old fertility cult in their covens,

in which the master was dressed in black with horns as in ancient Egypt, there is every reason to think that some such things were known of, and that the adepts may have had much strange and unholy knowledge of the kind. The famous Cumberland trials for witchcraft brought to light something quite out of the ordinary, in which hypnotism was the least of the powers displayed.

#### THE BHATRIS

There is a bogus form of religious mendicant, the *Bhatri*, that may perhaps be mentioned in this class, though he has no real claim to be so, and would be more justly written of among the criminal tribes. The *Bhatris* claim to Brahmin origin is the only plea for placing them in this chapter, but their doings while as evil as clever, are in a different class from the tribes described in Chapter VIII, who are thieves first and last.

The *Bhatris*, a word derived from *Bhat*, a religious bard, are thus in quite a different category, and claim to be Brahmins of Ceylon origin. However that may be, they are settled in several villages in the Punjab, and they collect money fraudulently from the whole of India for bogus charitable and religious objects, and in fact a bogus flag day is really their line of business. They appear in religious and educated disguise as *faqirs*, *pundits*, itinerant ascetics and the like. Claiming as their origin and eponymous ancestry, Mahdho Lal, a Brahmin, who married a dancing girl and raised her to his sainted status, they presume accordingly. They hawk worthless womens' ornaments and Vedic medicines in their lesser moments, but it is in the demanding subscriptions for bogus charitable objects that their principle trade lies. The amount they get is considerable, and they apparently appoint agents of their own class,

often women, to whom they send their spoil. A police inquiry into the postal orders coming to members of the community from outside, brought to light a remarkable stream of money directed from all over the country to a few, to all appearance, humble individuals. Indeed, many of the criminal classes find the Post Office a most useful confederate in handling their ill-gotten gains.

The *Bhatri* is not at all afraid of adding the European to his tally of victims. The usual procedure is a small tip to one of the servants in the compound to go and tell the *sahib* that a holy man wishes to tell his fortune. The good-natured *sahib* will often see him and the *Bhatri*'s small talk of religion is just the sort of thing that goes down. He will discuss philosophies, astrology, spirits, revelations, any sort of subject that might appeal to the semi-cultured, and the European will even feel that he really is getting in touch with the mysterious East, its systems, and its philosophies. Like the peep to see if your lady visitor is or is not a *churel* with her toes turned backwards, or looking to see the devil's tail hidden behind, the wise will know the *Bhatri* by the inevitable subscription list which appears at the finale of the heart-to-heart talk about the mysteries. The *Bhatri* is "so gratified at his long and interesting talk, for he has always heard so much of the wisdom and learning of this particular *sahib* that he feels sure he will help in the maintenance of his orphanage or his home for aged sacred cows". So the *sahib* falls to the benevolent visitor, and is admitted into the fraternity of mugs. Now *mugh* is but Hindu for a goose, and that is where this English slang word comes from, so that it is all very suitable.

The *Bhatri* is often also a Sikh, even genuinely so, for Sikhism like Christianity, does not bar rogues among its nominal adherents, and as Sikhs it suits them



to dress and appear as *nihangs*, viz., members of a Sikh religious fraternity. They also appear before Moslems as Husaini Brahmins, and thus claim their subscriptions and kindness, this being based on the ancient tradition that it was a Brahmin who found the body of the dead Husain, though what a Brahmin was doing on the banks of the Euphrates does not transpire. The plea seems to carry its keep, but best of all with kindly Indians does the holy man's appeal go down that he is collecting for the expenses of his daughter's marriage, for that is a plea which strikes a note in every India heart. In fact kindly folk and mugs are the sport of rogues all the world over.

Most soldiers in northern India will have dropped a rupee or so at one time or another to one Dombri, and the rogue, apparently a harmless one, used to turn up at most of the regimental gathering sports and the like. I have never made up my mind whether Dombri was a half-wit, a *Bhatri*, or a secret service agent. A little bit of all three probably, and full of the cunning that coaxed gentlemanly rupees as well as the annas of the soldiery into the Dombri pocket. Dombri would appear at every auspicious occasion, sometimes on the Frontier, sometimes down country as far as Central India. He carried a wooden harquebus, to which were nailed innumerable regimental badges, bad rupees and the like. Over his shoulder as a haversack was a beggars' gourd, and you would find him presenting the harquebus at the gate of your bungalow as you came home from mess or the lines. Bang would go sixpence or more if you were senior. Dombri was particular about your dignity in that respect. Once he announced the rather belated arrival of a senior officer at some sports by clearing a gangway and shouting "Make way! make way! for the puisant colonel of the 69th who would not give me a rupee last night," for there

was plenty of method in his madness. Last time I met him I was a general officer carrying out an inspection, and gave offence by rather pooh-poohing his claim to have raised many recruits for the World War. Yes, I think Dombri was a *Bhatri*, but a mild one. and I dare say useful to the police.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUPERSTITIONS AND HALF-GODS

SUPERSTITIONS — CHURELS — HALF-GODS —  
GODS—THE STORY OF DUM DEOTA DEVI

#### SUPERSTITIONS

THE life of the country folk all over India and the depressed classes in the towns is overcast by superstitions and fears. Whether it is the dark Dravidian beliefs of the South, whether it is the recurrent beliefs of earlier races in the North, whether it be mountains, forest, or plain, demons, spirits and ghosts abound.

There are innumerable half-gods too, patron saints and village deities to be propitiated, and whose caprice is terrible, while the evil eye overlooks you on all sides. The educated high-caste folk are not thus worried, but they, the high-caste alone, do not number twenty millions out of all the 350 millions, while many of them are of trivial educational attainments, since caste and this world's goods go not together of necessity.

Quite outside any of the orthodox religious teaching are these dark fears and beliefs that make the world so dread a place to wander in. The superstitions and half-gods vary in countless ways throughout the continent, and only a few samples can be given. Spirit worship, ancestor-worship, the propitiation of the dead, the sainted dead, the worship of the malevolent dead, ghosts, *jinns*, the worship of *sati*, all have their place in many different forms.

There are numerous beliefs regarding the evil-eye which is much dreaded, especially for children.

In the north the term in use which we thus translate is *nazar*, and it has a wider meaning than we in the West attach to the term "evil-eye". Children are very liable to *nazar*, and the very fact that the glance on them is one of admiration is enough to affect them. For this reason childrens' faces are sometimes left unwashed for six years, no doubt to their delight. It has been said even that the natural dislike of western children to having their faces washed is but evidence of the danger attending the habit! Anything beautiful or pleasing, if gazed on by someone malevolent, but stimulates his desire to do harm. For this reason beautiful things are often defaced with black, and black iron is specially potent to ward off evil effects, ordinary iron, however, does not suffice. The scape-goat is still a popular conception, and in times of sickness a goat is marked and let loose or buried in the centre of the village.

Charms against the evil-eye are sold and largely worn. They generally take the shape of an amulet containing some little verse written by a *faqir*, or *sadhu*. The inscription of a *faqir* written in ink on earthenware, and then washed off, and the liquid drunk is an admirable charm and cure.

Witches are a very serious matter, and take various forms.

In days gone by when treasure was often buried for safety, it was a frequent custom to bury a child alive with it, so that the ghost should protect it. For this reason treasure trove is often left untouched. *Bhuts*, the ghosts of the dead are always to be feared. The *bhut* of outcaste people is greatly to be dreaded, and they are buried with the face down so that they should not "walk". Attempts to bury *Churas* and *Doms* with their faces upwards would arouse great excitement, and which might easily turn into riots.

## THE CHUREL

Among the many dread superstitions that frighten the humble folk in India none is more pitifully terrifying than the *churel*. A *churel* is the ghost of a woman who has died in childbirth. All mankind very properly feels that the death of a woman thus must lie at the door of the man whose act has produced the occasion. Every man's conscience must somehow prick him, despite the fact that the woman may often be the original instigator of the act of conception. Man however has the guilty conscience of selfishness whether he deserves it or whether he does not. But evidently the dead woman sets her death at the father's door. For the *churel*, the ghost of the poor dead lass, dead, she says, to make her lover's holiday, must needs haunt all males, and especially those at whose hands her womb brought forth.

Every Indian man is therefore terrified lest he meet one. But the ghost does not appear as such, but as an attractive lass, beckoning and enticing it may be, and all men are warned to beware the enticing of what may be a *churel* seeking vengeance. Fortunately if you are wide awake you need not be deceived. A *churel* has an infallible tell-tale sign by which you may recognize her and escape. The feet are always turned backward, and when you see this be warned, respond not at all and go your way muttering all the charms you are capable of.

*Churels*, as a matter of fact, are of two classes, the ghosts of women who die while pregnant or on the very day of the birth, and those dying within forty days of the birth. The worst of all is the ghost of a pregnant woman who dies during the joyous festival of *Diwali* or Harvesthome. All *churels*, as has been said, are malignant, and especially towards their own family.

The not speaking referred to only gives a short immunity for no one can see a *churel* and live long.

To prevent a woman becoming one the greatest care is taken, and the bodies of those who die and might become one are specially entreated. Small roundheaded nails are driven into the finger nails, while the thumbs and big toes are welded together with iron rings. The surface of the ground on which she dies (folk are laid on mother-earth to die) is scraped and mustard seed sown. The mustard blooms in the world of the departed and the scent will keep her content, or she will stop to gather it and be overtaken by daylight, when her power of evil is gone. The *churel* of a dead co-wife may haunt the survivor and make her ill, in which case an image of the departed is made and revered, and the remaining wife wears a special silver charm round the neck. In fact this *churel* business is a very serious matter that must not be neglected. At Simla on the Mall stood an old water cistern under the deodars, known as the *Churel Baoli*, the "Well of the *Churel*", and it was a very terrifying spot, so that no one would pass it alone after dark. Folk would collect and then scuttle past in a party, singing lustily. Then the municipality put one of the new electric light standards nearby, and all was glare, so that the people rejoiced mightily and blessed the good *Sirkar*.

#### HALF-GODS

To enumerate the half-gods, the *Deotas* or *Devis*, of India, or even of one province, would be impossible, so many thousands are there, some kindly, helpful and motherly, some fierce, pernicky and hard to please, some treated with great reverence, some with scorn unless the affairs of the villages go happily. In every village and scattered across the fields are their shrines,

which are quite distinct from those of any temple of the great Hindu *persona* deities, Vishnu or Siva. There are as many to the Moslems as there are to the Hindus, but of different import, being in their case, saints. For the most part they are the godlets of the depressed outcaste and original folk, but by no means always. They are the gods of agriculture, of the bad wind, and the blight of the fertile womb and the barren. They also protect from *bhuts*, *jinns*, *churels*, and all the terrible things aforesaid. If you were to probe very deep into the mind of an educated man of the countryside he might tell you that real gods are too busy to attend to the lesser affairs of men and cattle, and pigs, and the ways of a man with a maid, and that he half-gods are on duty for that purpose. That would be a very good answer, and one which you might expect from ancient Babylonian, Attica or in Thrace, and from, let us say, Ireland in the west, and Italy to this day, and we will leave it at that.

Every *Devi* has a fantastic and romantic story of its origin. For instance in Kangra is *Kanya Devi*, the daughter of Brahma Rajah, who was so enamoured of her himself that he would not let her marry. To escape his advances she fled to a great rock on the hillside, which opened to receive her. Her amorous father was turned to stone outside, and the crumbled stone which is shattered by the heat of the summer but re-assembles in the rains, stands outside to this day. The shrine of *Kanya Devi* is at Nagrota, and she is especially benevolent to and interested in maidens.

Around Umballa in the lower Punjab, *Aka* or *Gyasi Devi*, the "Queen of Heaven" is very popular, and her mud shrines always *en evidence*.

In Kotgarh there is a formidable *Deota*, one *Melan* or *Chatur-Mukh* (four-faced). Three thousand years ago when the rule and teaching of the Brahmins had

hardly formed, and *varnaprasthra*<sup>1</sup> was the holy assembly, a one-eyed *deota* known as Kana (which but means one-eyed) reigned supreme. He, like the demon in the Mahasu story which follows, delighted in human sacrifices, and at the *shankrant* once a month a victim was sacrificed, selected from among their number by each family in turn. A woman there was who had given four sons, and now her last was demanded of her. Whereon she applied to the great Spirit *Nag* of Kachli, "the serpent" for help. The *Nag*'s reply like that of Our Lord at times, was not spectacular. He said, "go back, and when Kana's men come for your son look in my direction and fix your thoughts on me." The mother's faith, however, was great, and she went away content, and when the hour of trial came obeyed *Nag*'s instructions, when lo! a mighty storm arose, the shrine of Kana was destroyed, and the priestly attendants were killed by lightning. Henceforth *Nag* reigned supreme and the terrible rule of *Deota Kana* was at an end.

But *Nag* was a simple ascetic *Devi*, who did not want rule and worship. *Nolo Episcopari* he declared, but recommended those who wanted a benevolent *deota* to go to a shrine at Kharan, where three brother *deotas* had but one shrine between them, and invite one to come to the empty place. The three started in their ceremonial *raths* or carts to a fair given in their honour. The people prayed that the carts of the two who would not be suitable should stick in the mud. It was the second brother, *Chatur Mukh*, whose cart came through; he was duly chosen, and has reigned with prestige and power ever since—the simple tale of a simple folk, with no great point in it, but typical of them all.

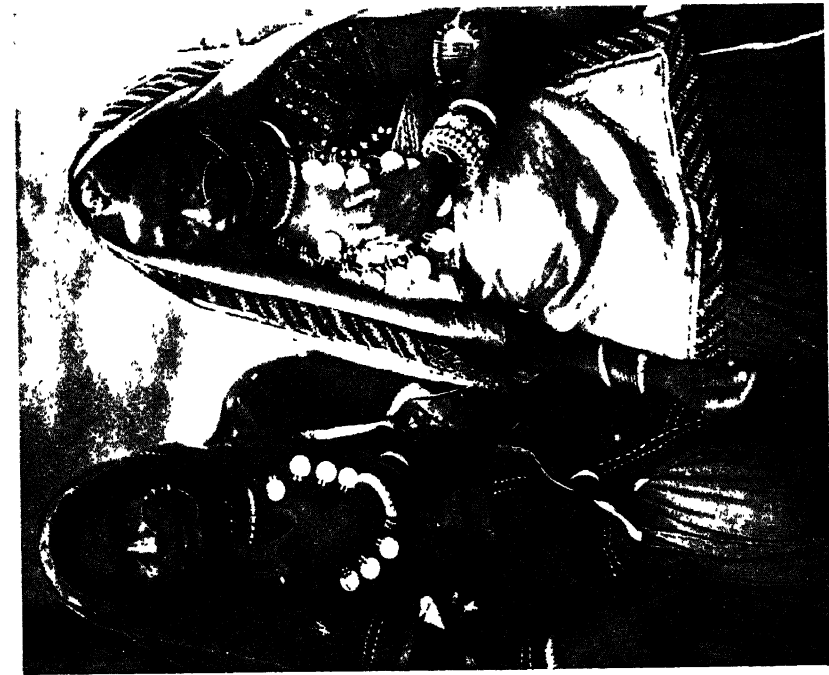
Away in the mountains close behind the summer

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<sup>1</sup> Forest meeting.



capital of Simla which once was Shamla, stands the beautiful hill of Mahasu, long a suburb of charming houses and happy picnickers. The English wot not that *Mahasu* is a very popular, powerful *Devi*, whose popularity and influence is spreading in the hill tracts, for with *devis* it is often, one go up and one go down, according to the fertility of their adherents' cattle and wives. The story of *Mahasu* is like many of the others. Once upon a time the valleys behind Simla were much oppressed by the cruel regime of a gang—and no other term suits them—of evil spirits. One of them who had become a *devi*, by name *Karmat Danu*, was a glutton for human sacrifice, and it happened that a pious Brahmin couple had had seven sons of whom six had been claimed by *Karmat Danu*, and at length a summons came for the youngest also to be given up. In her despair the mother fell into a trance and called that *Mahasu* from Kashmir would save her son. The father had never heard of *Mahasu*, but urged by his wife, he set out through the mountains for that holy country. He at last came on a tank where dwelt *Mahasu*, but he knew it not. Calling everywhere for the *devi* whom he sought, Uma Bhat, for that was the father's name, was accosted by one of the god's servants who told him to wait till *Mahasu* appeared, which he did in the shape of a gold image. *Mahasu* directed Uma to go home, make a plough of solid silver with one ploughshare of gold, and plough the land on the seventh Sunday, and he, *Mahasu*, would be there. And it was so. As Uma Bhat ploughed the furrow with, according to order, two bullocks that had never before borne the yoke, lo! gods and armed men sprung up on all sides. The oppressive demons were destroyed, the seventh son was saved, and *Mahasu* acknowledged far and wide as the only *devi* worth a *damn*. And this business and power of



DANCING GIRLS OF THE "OMELY ZORT"

THE SIMPLER WOMEN

*To face page 132*



A LOW CASTE VILLAGE GIRL NEAR DELHI



*Mahasu*, which in truth is but short for *Mahasiva*, has of late years waxed immensely.

The fairs or *melas* which are held annually, biennially or triennially, as the case may be, are usually in honour of some local *devi*. Their origins are often of great antiquity, and often represent one of the old sacrificial feasts of the Aryans, the *marmedi*, the *gau-medi* and the *asvahmedi*, the human, cow or horse sacrifice. Up to the period of British rule, human sacrifices in the hills were not uncommon, especially in honour of *Kali devi*, the cruel side of the female principle in the divine make-up of Siva. Indeed here is a terrible story from the criminal courts of the United Provinces of so late a date as April, '32. Seven women whose avocation was to sing at various village domestic festivals and occasions, were charged with murder. Finding themselves hoarse the morning of an engagement, to cure themselves of the hoarseness they killed a girl of nine years, cutting her to pieces with a sharp spade and offered the pieces as a sacrifice to *Bhowani*, another name for fierce *Kali Ma*, being women of the type to whom the Franchise Committee would wish to give a western franchise. It is but illustrative of the hold the old fierce cults have below the surface, as also shown in the case of *Sati* in the same month already quoted.

Not very long ago in Kangra an old cedar tree was cut down to which a girl used to be offered annually, the families in the village taking it in turn to furnish the victim. Mention has been made of the widespread belief still existing that children must be sacrificed at the foundations of any great work. When in 1882 the Viceroy opened the great Sirhind Canal, the people of the lower hills were convinced that 200 of the convicts who had been working on the dam were released on condition of their finding a similar number

of girls to be sacrificed at the inaugural ceremony. For several nights the villagers sat up with lighted fires and beating drums lest the kidnappers should be at work among their children.

#### THE STORY OF DUM DEOTA DEVI

It has been explained how the low caste and the depressed classes of Hinduism, the *Dom* and the *Bediya*, and all who miss the Aryan blood that is white despite its sun-tanned skins, have each and all their own godlets, and village deities of the old-time afore, whom Brahminism contemptuously admit. This is the story of a godlet that would not produce rain when the priests of Baal called on him, and what befell. It is illuminating as showing the confidence of the humble folk in the English administrator, and is the story of a mud village not far from Delhi, existing amid the ruins and remains of the Moslem Empire.

Let us see the small town amid the ruins and hear the story of the half-god of Daulatpur, in the Jumna-Ganges Doab, and how such potentates are to be disciplined if they do not their duty by their congregation.

Now Daulatpur is just a small town of the plains in the middle of a fertile tract of Hindustan proper, that portion of the Gangetic plain to which the Aryan invasion moved when it had absorbed the Punjab. It was in this country that the Aryan race developed their historical kingdoms and in which the Hindu faith with all its offshoots developed in the form we know it to-day, after surviving and reabsorbing the puritan movement of Prince Gautama.

It was this country too that bowed to the invasions of Islam, parting with many of its members as converts of the sword. It was this country in which Afghan and Mogul barons carved for themselves estates as the

Normans in England before them. It is here that the barons have decayed with the peace of the British and it is here that the Aryan cultivator and low caste tribes remain from generation to generation, while princes and potentates pass away.

Daulatpur, the "town of wealth and fortune", is a somewhat decayed relic of Mohammedan state, but the centre of a thriving trade in the cotton and grain and sugar that the countryside yields, so long as the rain rains in due season.

It is the centre of a small administrative district where the magistrate (the collector) and the policeman and the canal officer are the only Europeans. It is what is termed a civil station. At the time of the mutiny it was a cantonment. The cultivator tended his wheat and his cotton, and was intent on marrying and giving in marriage, as if never Moslem or Frank had swept over the countryside.

"And the ploughman settled the share,  
More deep in the sun-dried clod,  
Mogul, Maratha and Mlech from the north  
And White Queen over the seas,  
God raiseth them up and driveth them forth  
As the dust of the ploughshares flies in the breeze.  
But the wheat and the cattle are all my care,  
And the rest is the will of God."

So the countryside waxed fat, and the mango groves over the countryside that bring in such a plentiful harvest of fruit in the summer, grew and flourished and furnished that wonderful shade and park-like appearance that is so marked in those provinces.

Relics of earlier departed glories remain of the days when kings rode to Delhi, with

"Jewelled reins and bridle chains  
And golden snaffle bars."

Gardens and ruined fountains, and turreted gardens walls, cascades that once fell over carved stone ripple-breaks, and the remnant of fruit gardens planted from Central Asia, with :

“Plums opaquely amethyst  
Peaches like a morning mist.”

the stately country seat of some Mogul baron, now derelict and unvisited where murmur the winds and whispers the water to ghosts of other days.

A ruined tower and gate told of some stronghold of the earlier Afghan dynasties when their captains of horse carved out baronies from Hindu fields, and died away as marriage with the south thinned the northern blood, till the hand could no longer keep the head.

A neglected tomb tiled in hedge-sparrow blue, would contain an alabaster shrine of some saint on which would be carved the Hundred Names of God, or rather ninety-and-nine, with a space for that hundredth which it is not well that the common herd should know, and which in Israel only the High Priest might say. And round the curve of the dome, in Kufic character, can still be read the solemn texts from El Koran “Line upon line, precept upon precept”. Yet the power of Islam in India has left the Hindu districts, and the old cult that survived the power of the Buddha has survived the purity of Islam.

The carved temples stand in the groves, and conches bray, and bells ring, but the call of the faithful to prayer is stilled.

The old gods that represent the forces of nature and the cycles of life remain, and the people flock to the rites of the Hindu trinity in temples that stood before Islam, and to the shrines of their half-gods.

And layered over it all, chalk, perhaps on granite,

is the civilization and the orderly administration that the British have veneered on top of this welter of ancient cults and ancient kingdoms. By the tennis courts some ancient Moslem may watch the masters play and mutter, as Lyall had it :

“Near me a Mussalman, civil and mild,  
Watched as the shuttlecock rose and fell,  
And he said as he counted his beads and smiled,  
God smite their souls to the nethermost hell ’.”

So much for that conflicting welter of gods and half-gods that ever disturbs India.

It was in the early days of summer, and an early hot weather at that. The beautiful skies of the cool season had turned to the pea-soup sky of summer. The dust devils skimmed down the mall, widershins, and the Pershian wheel droned in the garden to keep the shrubs alive and the grass green. Punkahs creaked in house and office, the magistrate's wife had gone to the Himalayas, and the policeman's wife to England. The rainy season was yet far away, and that alleviation of the early summer—the mango showers—had not come. The pasture had gone from the fields and the roadway, and not a blade of grass was left on the countryside. The bones of the cattle were showing ominously, and that full early. In India the cattle grow thinner and thinner as the summer wears on, and woe-betide them if there are no showers to bring some grass shoots, before the real rainy season carpets the whole world with green, and the cattle slowly swell back to due proportions. If the rain fails the cattle must die.

In this province too, where the mango crop brings in large profits, the gardeners look for the mango showers, and lo ! this year there had been none. The mangoes threatened to wither on the trees, and at best would be but turpentine and string, rather than full



with ripe yellow flesh. So the country was disturbed in spirit, and, as is the wont when the rain fails, was inclined to turn to politics.

At the close of a sweltering day, the magistrate and the policeman, the canal-man, and the Indian doctor had assembled for tennis, to be followed by bridge, in the garden under the *punka* at the Station Club, and to wonder when the mail and the new English papers would arrive. It was almost too oppressive even for tennis. Suddenly, in the distance, came the sound of a tom-tom—nay, of several tom-toms—accompanied by shouts and the braying of a conch. The sounds came nearer, with the echoes of a chant and the cries of a crowd. The magistrate looked at the policeman, and the policeman looked at his watch.

"Seem to be going to your house," said he to the magistrate.

"By Jove, so they are! We had better go and see what is up."

As they hurry down the road the policeman calls to his orderly:

"Hurry to the police station and tell the *thanadar* to bring all the constables he can find at once to the collector *Sahib's* house."

Outside the magistrate's house the procession had come to a halt. The crowd consists of country folk, and a dozen Hindu mendicants in yellow—some loathly with matted hair, others clean and well-to-do, with quiet, calm faces, but both kinds in yellow. At the head a few priests, with conches and long brass horns, and in front some drummers beating tom-toms. The villagers carried flags of many hues. Back among them something appeared carried shoulder high.

"It can't be the shrines of the Muharram; wrong time of the year," said the magistrate.

"No," said the other; "can't you see it is a Hindu

crowd? They have a god on a chair wrapped in orange and crimson."

"So they have. What's it all about?"

"Don't know; seems fairly harmless, but the *thanadar* will be here in a minute with the constables."

"Don't think we shall want that; but look, there's old Bhagwan Dass, the head man of Pateli village."

And as the magistrate and policeman came up to the garden gate by which the procession had halted, an elderly gentleman in white, with a magenta *pug-garee*, stepped out and salaamed. A quaint figure, much as Augustus described Horace, "*Sessilis Obba*," a squat little pot.

"Oh, ho, Bhagwan Dass *jee*, *Salaam*! What is up. Are you getting married? Is this your wedding procession, or perhaps your son's?"

And the squat little pot came forward with his hands joined in combined salutation and submission. And seeing that he was well received, took from a priest's arm two heavily scented garlands of white *chumpak* flower, and hung them round the necks of the two Englishmen.

"*Sahib*, this is not wedding—neither mine nor my son's; but it is a very serious matter. God Almighty has put great trouble on us, and you have often told me that I am responsible, and that when there is trouble I am to come to you.

"You know Pateli village, *Sahib*—how we live by our cattle and dairy produce, and by the fruit of all those mango trees that were planted when Shah Alum was king of Delhi. Now we have no rain; it is due this three weeks, and the grass is dead and the cattle die, and the mangoes wither on the trees. The people are very angry; some say that the Mohammedan *faqir* at the shrine of Altamish the Toork has cursed us, because the village where the shrine garden is, three

miles away, has had rain and we have had none. The young men want to throw pig in that shrine. But I have said 'No ; that will only bring on these dogs of police to bully our women and live at free quarters'."

"That was a very wise saying of yours, Bhagwan Dass ; no one wants to have police sent on them."

"The *Khudawand* knows that I am loyal and peaceful headman. I have said to my people, this is from God Almighty, whom you, Sir, so greatly resemble. But God Almighty is too busy to think of the harm that the want of rain does to poor folk here. He wants rain for snow in Himalaya. Therefore I say it is fault of our village god, Dum Deota. Every morning all our women hanging marigolds and offering ghee, and praying, but Dum Deota, though he knows our village must have rain, and though he knows that we have built him, in the days of our fathers, finest shrine in the district, yet he never troubling. So I say to our young men, let us take Dum Deota Devi out of shrine and take to collector *Sahib*, and say 'This Devi, very lazy and idle. Please of goodness put him in *choki*. Lock him up in prison in *Sahib's* own house until rain coming.' So all young men very pleased and stop planning to put pig in mosque, and then we all make procession and we tell priest that if he makes objection then we beat him and get another."

So here was a kettle of fish—Dum Deota Devi, half-god and village patron and deity, brought to be imprisoned in the magistrate's house !

However, to put the godlet into *choki* was a simpler affair than to risk a Hindu and Mohammedan riot, at a time when all the old animosity was especially bitter, and bloodshed would be certain to ensue. So Mr. Bailey, collector of Daulatpur, experienced district officer, abused by agitators and beloved of squire and

peasantry, and principal supporter of British prestige, took heart of grace.

"Bhagwan Dass, you have shown great wisdom. Dum Deota Devi has greatly neglected you, and he shall be punished. It is more than well that you have come to me. Where shall I put him? It would not be right that he should go to the police *choki*."

"No, *sahib*, he must be locked up in your house; have you not some empty room?"

"I have a small godown here. It is full of my camp furniture, but I will move it out. Here, bearer, open that godown door at the side of the house."

Then Mr. Bailey and the head man went and looked, and Bhagwan Dass agreed that it was the very place, and that there was no need to move out even the camp furniture. "Serve him right if he is crowded up!" So Dum Deota Devi of Pateli, half-god, was then and there shoved into the furniture godown, and the door double-padlocked, chair and all going in, and only the carrier poles being withdrawn.

And then the procession immediately turned about and danced away down the road, with tom-toms beating and horns braying, and the squat little pot took his leave and scrambled on to a squat little pony, and hurried after his people.

Then the magistrate looked at the policeman and laughed.

"Queer business this. Here am I, collector of Daulatpur, with a local god locked up in my godown. What will the local Government say if the Hindu press makes a row?"

"Should not bother much. You can make a lot out of the frustrated pig row. In spite of the fact that the Khilafat trouble is over, there is going to be much Hindu and Mohammedan trouble. There are these reconversions of Mohammedans to Hindus, that are

making trouble near Delhi. I should come back to the club and see what the weather report says about the mango showers."

And so they did, with a whisky-and-soda thrown in ; and that night it got hotter and hotter, till a furious sandstorm drove all and sundry from the housetops to the baked rooms below.

And the next day was worse than its predecessors and Dum Deota Devi gave no sign. But that night was like a compression oven, and men gasped at their dinners, and heads seemed to burst. Then, after dinner, it suddenly thundered, and great drops fell and birds and bats flitted in terror and the rain came down with deep wall lightning, and the dust ceased to blow, and the air was laden with that peculiar sweet smell of the parched but drinking earth. All around were sheets of water on which the lightning played till the storm died away in content, and the roar was succeeded by calm, while distant lightning flashes illuminated the horizon, and happy folk in their pyjamas listened to the music of long parched rills.

Then a sleep of great peace fell on the land, and at midday next day, along with the now dustless roads the conches and villagers returned in the brightest of head-dresses. And at their head rode "*Sessilis Obba*" otherwise Bhagwan Dass, on his squat grey pony, highly decorated with pink hand impressions.

The magistrate met them at the gate.

"*Sahib*, we of the village of Pateli have come for Dum Deota Devi. Three days' *choki* was just what he wanted ; that is the way to teach *Devis* to mend their ways."

So the padlocks were unlocked, and Dum Deota Devi, in his chair was once again hoisted on the shoulders of the villagers amid a chorus of ironical spirits who would now restore him, and worship him again, and duly present the accustomed offerings.

And so the half-god came by his own again, but it seemed to Bailey that the chief priest winked at him as he passed, which was a very unpriestly thing to do. And as the procession swung out of the garden gate it broke into the old song of the days of John company :

“ *Khulk i Khuda*  
*Mulk i Sirkar*  
*Hukm i Sahiban Alisban.*”

which may be translated :

“Mankind belongs to God,  
 And the land to Government,  
 And power to the mighty *Sahibs*.”

which in these days of Mr. Gandhi, in prison or out, and the aspirations of the advanced reformers is an unpalatable home-truth and quite wicked even to think. It certainly seemed to the villagers of Pateli that the *Collector Sahib*, the cherisher of the poor and the protector of all, had understood, as he understood everything, exactly how to bring half-gods to their senses. And perhaps he did.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### CRIMINAL TRIBES AND CLASSES

CRIMINAL TRIBES—THE CRIMINAL TRIBES AND THE  
MISSIONS—THE PRINCIPAL TRIBES—HARNIS—  
THE MOONLIGHTERS

#### CRIMINAL TRIBES

QUITE apart from criminals as such and quite apart from, though included among, the Untouchables, are the so-called "Criminal Tribes" of India, numbering considerably over a million. They really present a most interesting ethnological problem, and are deserving of much study, before an improving and humane Government develops them into the general mass of low caste men. These tribes are mostly nomad folk, or those who have temporary settlements from which they proceed on their usually lawless avocations. Many of them resemble the gypsies of Europe, but their origin is wrapped in oblivion. Differing greatly in habits, pursuits, observances and methods of crime, and in the language they employ, they are in most cases entirely outside any recognized or mentionable form of Hinduism, sacrificing and worshipping to strange deities and patron saints, served, perhaps, by renegade ex-communicate Hindu priests, they are absolutely the scum, the flotsam and jetsam of Indian life of no more regard than the beasts of the field.

Every province has its own "criminal" nomad tribes, who wander within a definite radius. The same tribe or clan may have parties of similar name and habits in more than one province, while the same

peoples are often known to the inhabitants of the different districts by different names.

All that is really known is that they are an entirely distinct race from the ordinary inhabitants of India, and also from the settled aboriginal stock as known to-day, who inhabit the more wooded and wider regions of the interior of India, *i.e.*, Ghonds Bhils, etc. A careful anthropological study with cephalic indices may throw more light on the matrix whence they sprang.

It is probable however, that their origin is varied. Some may be the descendants of earlier inhabitants driven forth from their own homes far back in the mists of time, who with their hand against everyone *khanah par dosh*, "their home on their back", have wandered ever since expatriation, in search of a living amid hostile or at best unfriendly surroundings. Quite recently the researches of the Indian Archæological Department, have discovered on the Indus in Sind and in the Punjab some settlements and city sites of great antiquity. These discoveries have put a new aspect on the problem of the population of India before the Aryans came down through the passes of Afghanistan and across the Indus from the high steppes of Central Asia.

These sites with the present names of Mohenja Daro and Harappa exhibited the remains of civilization and a building art akin to that of Babylonia and Ur of the Chaldees. Seals, Babylonian in form, in an unknown script, and *objets d'art* of many kinds have been forthcoming. But there are apparently no palimpsests, the remains beneath the soil have no succession of Troy towns above the early one. The cities have been abandoned and most of the property removed. There are no layers of charcoal even, that denote the burning of the buildings, as when he of Elam said he burnt the palace of Dungi King of Ur, and the founda-



tions cylinders of Dungi were found in identification of the buildings, thousands of years later, with the layer of ash on the floor that tests the tale again. The inhabitants of these ancient sites had gone lock, stock and barrel and left no trace. Pestilence, an upheaval that disturbed the water bearing strata, a pestilence or the fear of invaders, sent them forth from their homes to leave no sign. Possibly it is they and such as they who may first have founded a wandering and now degenerate community.

Many may be the original owners of the soil before Aryan or even Dravidian came down, and have wandered to avoid the position of menial pensionnaires that have so long been the lot of the *Dom*, *Chura* and *Chamar* aforesaid. Some of the tribes are Moslem, disreputably Moslem, some have adopted the customs and some of the Hindu forms, some are still animists of the simplest type. Many prostitute their women shamelessly, and such are among the attractive impudent flotsam of the wayside, others hold their virtue in marked strictness, with the cutting off of noses as among the Afghan tribes as penalty for lapse. Some infibulate their women when absent on their forays as religiously as any old crusading knight.

Some of them undoubtedly came into India with Turk and Afghan conquerors. Every great Eastern Army from early times has with it tribes of inferior people with their own special trades and carrying their own goods on their own ponies, donkeys, or pack bullocks, fending for themselves, but sharpening the weapons or making the huts or shoeing the horses of the armies. Many such are still in Afghanistan, hardier variants of the Hindu criminals. Such for instance are a notorious tribe of thieves, the *Chapparbands*, at one time the "makers of huts" for the Mogul Armies, but out of a job these two centuries past.

When tribes and races have only one role, and that role ceases, unless a Government can come to their rescue, there is little hope for them to be anything but thieves in a countryside that has no use for newcomers.

There can be little doubt that the gypsies of Europe followed the armies of Hun and Tartar and Seljuk, and our own Romanies who now tinker and grind our knives, sharpened swords and spear points for the armies over-running Europe. The criminal tribes of India have each their own thieves' jargon, and comparison of these with the Romany should show even stranger results than comparison with Urdu, that *lingua franca* of the Turkish Urdu or "Army".

The divisions are so many that an enumeration would be but wearisome, and it will suffice to glance at the activities of the more important of them which are typical of the many hundreds of thousands that they aggregate.

#### THE CRIMINAL TRIBES AND THE MISSIONS

Ever since the Government of India had overcome the first difficulties of law and order, and had suppressed Thugs and the Pindari leavings, its beneficent outlook turned towards these broken cowries of many markets with some more helpful outlook than mere police repression. How were these inveterates, thieves, pimps and pandars, with all the sublimated roles into which such instincts can be diverted, whose hand was against every man, and with whom none of their own countrymen, had the least sympathy, to be brought to any form of human rectitude and outlook. Many a kindly collector and deputy commissioner had set himself to work so far as his own power lay, many a police officer hot on the scent of their crimes has

dreamed of something better. Land settlement with secondary industries and the regularizing of the gypsy industries of which they were capable, baskets, skins, snakes and the like, have been tried with little enough result. It is true, there has often been employment for the public works of India, the building of vast railway embankments, the storage of river waters, demand temporary labour. The labour that has no abode, for whom tin shacks and grass walls are a paradise, who make their own baskets and thrive on a ration are admirable as unskilled labour. Like ants, thousands of such, squatting happily in bivouac in neighbouring thorn, have carried earth on their heads to make the railways of India, every toddler even bearing his share. Because they are as they are, the superstitious folk who believed that their children must be kidnapped and buried alive in order that great buildings and bridgeheads may flourish, look on them with fierce hatred. Indeed this kidnapping fear is as deep to-day in village minds as ever, and in Bombay riots have arisen on the mere rumour that Afghan traders are kidnapping children for the engineers to lay foundations.

Because, however, years of trial have produced but meagre results with these Ismaelites, the Government have invited the services of religious bodies. The Hindu world cared not one jot or one tittle if such outcasts became Christian; so certain of the missionary bodies have been called to the work and the ever ready Salvation Army.<sup>1</sup> They have instituted admirable settlements and tried very hard to make happy and settled citizens from the people, and have met with considerable success with the individuals. Troops of scouts and guides, nurses, etc., have grown up among the other industrial and educational facilities. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Salvation Army alone has close on forty settlements aggregating some down south.

power to deal with them has been put into the hands of these beneficent bodies by law,<sup>1</sup> and at times whole clans have been committed as it were to their care, escape therefrom has become a punishable offence. But the settlements, admirable in every way, do not cope with the problem as a whole, though making a useful base from which land and industrial development can emanate. The missionaries themselves, however, confess to great disappointment. Happy and enthusiastic bodies as the tribesmen often become for a while, they backslide terribly. Reference has already been made to the *Chapparbands*, a wandering people who for generations made the huts for the Mogul Armies, those moving cities of people, soldiers and all who followed and lived on the soldiery. These for generations marched the length and breadth of India, and for half a century were employed specially in destroying the independant Moslem kingdoms of the Deccan and combating the rising spirit of revolting Mahrattadom.

When Mogul and Mysore armies failed them, although they served the earlier British in a similar capacity for a while, the need for them soon ceased, Mogul Mahratta and Pindari had passed and an awful calm came on the land. The *Chapparband* was out of a living and none to give it him. Hopelessly criminal in the pilfer and petty larceny line, they were eventually handed over to a centre at Hubli in the Southern Mahratta country, to the care of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. This particular criminal tribe the *Chapparbands*, took among other activities to coining and became adept enough to play havoc among the simple village folk, whose eye for a good and a bad coin was none too keen.

The Hubli settlement started in 1920, and by 1930 it had grown into a town of between two and three

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<sup>1</sup> The Criminal Tribes Ord. 1911, First arranged by Sir John Hewitt.

thousand folk of whom both men and women found honest work in the industries of Hubli, and in an agricultural settlement in the country. It is a good work admirably carried out, yet with life-long disappointments to the eager workers, of whom many are Indian of higher castes. The peoples do not, however, as hoped, embrace Christianity, the Christians in the vast settlement are few, the old dark cults of the non-Aryan appeal more, and some of the tribes glory in their evil traditions despite the civilization that has been shown them. Women are far less touselled, and are neat and bright, the children are happy urchins, the old foul diseases are gone, but the missionaries find still how little mark chalk makes on granite. The *Ghattiwaddars* still drink because it is their pride, the *Bestors* and *Dong Dasaris* still prostitute their daughters for gain, the *Chantichors*, the bundle-stealers, have changed their name to *Mill-waddars* because they work in the cotton-mills, but they are still even under mission auspices, feckless and unstable. The *Haran-shikaris*, the deer hunters, with a bloody worship and goat sacrifices, eagerly drinking the blood of the victim, find Christianity poor stuff. And so the good missionaries work away and are sorrowful, but the good they do bears fruit of some kind. You cannot expect to change the habits of a thousand years in less than a generation. In the hope of quicker results they work on; the S.P.G. in Hubli, the C.M.S. elsewhere, the Salvation Army in innumerable centres, the Church of Rome in work that has been brilliant. And for those who do not know, let it be said that this has nothing to do with the mass Christianity movements of the South in the diocese of Dornikal and Tinnevely. These are among a settled people, humble compared with contemptuous Aryanism, but not in any way resembling the criminal gypsy tribes.

## THE PRINCIPAL TRIBES

Since the tribes in question number close on two million there is little to be gained by enumerating them, but a few of the principal ones are given here, especially those with any unusual characteristics.

It is to be remembered that similar tribes exist in different parts of India and bear different names. These names are sometimes their own, but are often a local name which is different from that by which they are known in another province. Among the more numerous tribes are the *Lankati Burdis* in the Central India Provinces, *Harnis* and *Bhatras* in the Punjab, *Chandrawedis* (Moon observers) of Central India, *Nowsarias* in the United Provinces, *Minas* in Oudh and upper India. In lower Bengal there is a criminal tribe claiming to be Brahmins and calling themselves *Jadera* Brahmins. The total of such tribes may be imagined from the following figures of three of them, *Berads* 177,000, *Katkaris* 76,000, *Pardhis* 1,200.

In the west are the curious *Ramoosies* and *Wuddars*. The *Ramoosies* all thieves, furnish the night watchmen over British and other bungalows, a species of black-mail which ensures immunity from theft, and curiously enough develops a sense of duty and responsibility, while also giving an indication that it is the want of adequate livelihood that is the real origin of their present irregular existence. The *Ramoosi* faithful watchman, with a deep cough, that tells you that he is really awake and keeping faithful ward, is always an incorrigible pandar, being prepared to produce ladies of the flimsiest virtue at the shortest notice.

An important tribe, some of whose branches are decidedly criminal, are the *Brinjaras*, who in the West are also called *Vanjaris*. They exist in many parts of central and western India, are of special interest, and

have also a status ahead of the usual criminal tribe. They have for generations been peripatetic, common carriers bringing supplies from the grain merchants to the armies of the Mogul and generally carrying grain for the world in which they lived. Sir Arthur Wellesley took particular care to bind them to himself with the result that he never wanted carriage for his supplies. Their beasts are merely pack bullocks of a hardy variety, driven in parties known as *Tandas*. The old jingle of the days of Mogul greatness, tells the story of their usefulness to the great marching military and Imperial camps, and the privileges that it was worth while to give them.

*Rangan ka pani, chappar ka ghas*  
*Din ka tin kun muaf*  
*Our Jahan Asaf Jah ki ghore*  
*Wahan Bhanji Jhangi ke bail.*

Water food and shelter free  
 Three murderers a day to be pardoned  
 Then where Asaf Jah's horse may go  
 There the bullocks of Bhanji Jhangi will follow.

*Bhanji Jhangi* is the generic popular name for the *Brinjara*, and he is also known as the *Baharupa*, the person of "many faces", or many disguises, because as a spy newsmonger and thief, he also gains the admiration of the India world. One or two of them are admirably portrayed by Mrs. Steel in *On the Face of the Waters*, who as Siddhu and Tiddhu change rounds and characters throughout that fascinating story.

The Asaf Jah of the jingle was the great Chin-chillik Khan the Turkish Governor of the Deccan in the later Mogul times, Kingmaker in the days of the collapse and the progenitor of the present Nizam of the Deccan, who alone of Mogul nobles still holds

sway and carries high prestige. The *Brinjara* are long settled down in most provinces, the march of the railway having killed their old profession. Expert thieves are drawn from their ranks, especially cattle thieves, and long range cattle stealing is their *forte*. They venture far away from home to launch their plans, and leave little enough clue to their movements. Mrs. Brinjara is a bright and comely woman dressed in dark blue, her well moulded breasts in a brassière embroidered with little bits of twinkling mirror sewn in with yellow silk and beetles wings of gold and green an adept no doubt in venery like most of her tribal sisters.

Among the more numerous are the *Bedars* in the Bombay side, numbering up to 180,000 souls. Many of them are settled on land, and in lesser industry, but others still roam. They can travel thirty miles in a night, and after a theft will be many miles away before the hue and cry is possible. Cattle stealing, one of their favourite pursuits, is thus an easy matter, their women are often *jogters*, i.e., prostitutes, and will often go as mistresses, and remain for a long while in order to prepare facilities for burglary.

The *Bhamptas* are railway thieves *par excellence*, and though of an aboriginal race they apparently swell their ranks with any likely recruits. They are the masters of reputable disguises and may be easily mistaken for prosperous farmers, for well-to-do traders, for forest guides or any other role that fancy urges them to adopt. Their women are comely but hopelessly immoral. They too, are expert at appearing in reputable guise and both male and female reap their harvest in railway carriages by gaining the confidence of travellers. A favourite trick is to make their babies kick and scream, and then to take them on the floor for peace and quiet and to suckle them to sleep. While



there a small crooked knife slits up the traveller's bags and bundles. They, as most of the criminal tribes, have always expanded the orifices of the body for the reception of stolen goods. As many as eighteen rupees have been extracted from a *Chapparband's rectum*, while female detectives and searchers are needed to deal with the superior female capacity in this direction.

The *Chapparbands* who, because of their long association with Moguls profess Islam, are experts in this form of concealment and also will swallow stolen money and pass it without apparent injury to their tanned internals.

Some such as the *Kaikadis* are profusely tattooed and tattoo other folk as a profession, and they roam far and wide. It is they as a rule, who have performing monkeys, and as with most, though not all the tribes, their women are entirely immoral. As dacoits they have an evil reputation, and while most of the criminal tribes do their work as quietly as possible, the *Kaikadis* are given to violence even more than those implacable dacoits of the non-criminal tribes. Any dacoity with excess of violence is usually traceable to this tribe, at any rate in the west of India.

The *Kolis* are a portion of the aboriginal people, from whom the term "coolie" derives, found in many parts of India who have taken to crime and of whom there are said to be a million and a quarter in Guzerat alone. They are enterprising in their criminality and will even impersonate parties of police, and in this capacity descend on a village, arrest perhaps the genuine village constable on a disciplinary charge, and put him in irons, while they then proceed to strip the whole village. In this part of India some of the popular dislike of the police may even be due to the *Kolis* and who have robbed in police guise, a pretty way of paying off scores on the latter.

It is not perhaps necessary to discuss all and sundry ways that these ingenious folk have discovered, to make a living at the expense of those who have failed for so many centuries to make them part of the fabric of India, but such are the curiosities and working briefs of every police officer.

The *Pan* of Orissa, an aboriginal tribe, is worthy of mention, chiefly because from being an original and congenital cattle thief, his experience in the Indian gaols among the old lags of the other tribes has produced in him a ready assimilation of all their crimes and vices. In fact the Indian gaols have become wonderful schools of finished crime, a happening which only experience and a wider knowledge of what massed criminal wit can bring forth, has made authority aware of this phase of the problem.

#### HARNIS

One more of the vagabond tribes is worthy of description at more length, the *Harnis*, because there is some story of an origin which may also apply *mutatis mutandis* to others who have no tradition. The *Bhatris*, those plausible rogues, whose claim to be anything at all at any rate, has the merit of impudence, have been described under religious mendicants.

The *Harnis* are one of the most persistent of rogue tribes, with more daring and character than many, and are the constant care of the police in the Punjab and United Provinces, as well as in the Nizams' Territory, while they even carry themselves off to Burma as a happy hunting ground. *Harni* is but Sanscrit for a thief, and the tribes' own legend that some rajah lad called them *Haranis* because one of them had caught a wounded deer on foot for him, is but on a par with their gift of humbugging the world. They were

probably brought by Mahmud of Ghuzni from a village near Kabul, and settled originally at Manseri near Delhi. They may easily have been a semi-criminal tribe even then, one of those who made their livelihood behind marching armies, where their good-looking and free-living women alone would have been an asset.

There is no need, therefore, to believe them of Pathan origin. On the other hand, as already explained, the occurrence of cataclysms to a village, either by reason of pestilence or invasion, may easily have turned a better folk to vagrants, whom no one would succour. Whatever was their story we find them in the vicinity of Ludhiana, and in other parts of northern India in our own time, and they themselves claim that they are of Rajput origin turned Moslem, and that they served and were protected by one Rai Kullah, a chief of Ludhiana. The mere fact that they had come from Kabul need not vitiate that claim. They have *gots* or sub-clans that bear Rajput names, but they may have by agreement in the past, jumped these without the least claim to them. On the other hand, the Kabul story itself is probably accurate. Whatever their origin may be, their record as determined persistent criminals of ingenuity and daring is considerable.

In 1818 they got into trouble with the British at Ludhiana, and we find Sir David Ochterlony, the British agent on that frontier, as it then was, calling on the Rajah of Kapurthalla to expel them from his dominions, and in the break-up of authority before the Sikh wars we hear of their seizing five villages in the Punjab.

They now proceed all over India in search of opportunity, and appear as *faqirs*, or as *hakims*, that is to say as quack doctors, and often carry a leper about with them whom they use to frighten off others from

pressing their observation too closely. Especially is this useful when they have stolen goods on their pack animals. In Burma they appear as *qalandars*, viz., with performing animals, usually monkeys, but in Bombay their women live on the Punjabi stokers of ships and other up-country seafarers, the husbands often serving as doorkeepers to their wives. They strip their clientele mercilessly of their wages, and are accomplished in this direction as ever Doll and Moll in the old sailing days of the western ports.

Their women too often go as mistresses to, and even marry, well-to-do Moslems and others, and after a while disappear with the wealth of the house, taking their children with them. If discovered by their protectors in their attempts to get away, the usual defence is to declare themselves sweeper women. Rather than have it proclaimed that they have lived with a sweeper woman, with all the obliquity that such must engender, their victims let them go. The *Harni* is also to be found as a *mirasi*, a musician, both for the living and for the opportunity of discovering where to thieve. They profess extreme Moslem orthodoxy, with special reverence to one of the more famous *Pirs*, or saints of the north, and being active and wiry are sometimes enlisted in the troops of the Kapurthala state. The attempts to reclaim them have not been very successful, but at the same time their superior origin should promise a measure of success. Unfortunately, they operate largely in and out of the Native state boundaries, where either the Criminal Tribes Act does not run, or is but slackly administered. In fact the general deterioration in administration of the last ten years, and the occupation of the Police in combating sedition and inter-communal hatred, has given some of the criminals a fresh lease of life.

The *Harni* is always very adept at making up as

any sort of religious mendicant, and carries out some of his villainies in this disguise. On the principle of a thief to catch a thief, the police and Secret Service find the *Harni* mendicant a useful employee, well knowing, however, that he may at any time try a little double-crossing, this being an accomplishment to which indeed all Eastern criminals and diplomats as well, are congenially inclined.

The *Harni*, among other traits, wear as few clothes as may be, and never trousers, loin cloths for the men, and bright petticoats for the baggages, being the invariable rule.

#### THE MOONLIGHTERS

Among all the strange underground criminal and semi-criminal folk there are none perhaps so strange and romantic as the *Chandrawedis*, and though I have called them "the moonlighters", I might almost do so in satire. Their name means those to whom Chandra . . . "the moon", is fatal into whose doings the moon peers and by whom they are broken in pieces. They would be better described as the moonlight-shunners, and this is their story.

Some ninety years ago, about the period in India represented by the First Afghan War just after the Accession of Queen Victoria, there lived in the Native State of Datia, two goldsmiths, who claimed to be Brahmins, by name Ral Lal and Madan Prasad, both reputed men of learning as well as craftsmen, one a soothsayer and the other a man who understood the language of birds. And one day they met on the banks of a river, a rich merchant who with his wife was proceeding on a pilgrimage to Jagannath. While drinking water a crow near by commenced to caw, and the one said to the other "That crow says that if

we can secure the walking stick of the merchant we shall be rich."

In the troublous times just passing, when Thuggee itself had only just been successfully tackled, there were many devices for secreting money, and valuables. Gold mohurs would be found sewn into the soles of shoes, into the seams of coats, and the ordinary respectable women were clever at concealing valuables in the orifices of the body.

So the two goldsmiths accompanied the merchant some way on his road and then managed to get away with his stick. True enough, when they examined the stick, which was malacca, thick and solid and extremely heavy, they found that it was filled with gold coins.

Our friends, encouraged by their first effort, now agreed to try a life of crime in preference to a trade, and not only did so, but set up a training school for thieves both for children and adults and practically started what was a complete thieving confederacy. The boys, who were admitted without reference to cast, swore on their initiation that they would never steal by moonlight. They became in fact a gang of open and above board daylight thieves of great skill and enterprise. As it happened the Maharaja of Datta on the good principle aforesaid of set a thief to catch a thief, a principle honoured even in the conception of the "Forytwa" the Black-Watch, and having now heard of their reputation, hired a party of them to escort his own baggage, which he was sending on a mission of state to Delhi, which they did honestly enough.

It came about that in Durbar, the discussion arose as to what class of servants in the various states were the most profitable. The Maharajah of Datia perhaps in whimsical mood, cited the attainments of his faithful thieves whom he dubbed his *Chandrawedis*. From

that day the confederacy waxed stronger and more influential and be it inferred more daring.

At one time considered a sect of high caste Hindus it is now known that they admit any Hindus except sweepers and chamars, but practically no Moslems, and they keep to the odd ritual of the "Fagin" school and moon-oath for little boys, and the solemn oath of membership on the *Tulsi-ganga*. They became in fact much as the Thug fraternity without the murderous concomitants. As in the orders of secret societies there are in degrees of proficiency so with the *Chandrawedis*. For a year the candidate is a *Derswala* entitled to but half a confederate's share of gain, and then he becomes a "*upardar*" or a "*chawa*" which means the actual stealer, a master-thief or conductor. If a man prefers he may remain a *derswala*, since as the *upardar's* post is not one of much danger, he does not necessarily become a sharer in full. But if he prospers in resource efficiency, and skill, he will be elevated to the degree of *Nalband*, the leader of a gang of twenty. Because their crime is silent, highly organized with few of the risks that attend more violent crime, membership is sought after and the *Chandrawedis* have increased, though of late years the great increase in police effectiveness has kept them in hand. They predominate in the states of Gwalior and Datia and in the British districts of Jhansi and Bundelkand.

The *nalband* prefers lads it is said and trains them in clumps of six. Like most of the thieving tribes and confederacy they work through a code of signs and a secret vocabulary. As in the Thug days they can only work when the omens are good and a *nalband* will consult a *Jotishi* or soothsayer as to which way he shall start forth. Some time after the Dasera festival in the late autumn is the usual time to start, just as in lordly Indian circles when the rains are over and fodder abounds, princes would

start on *mulk-geri*, "land-seizing," removing their neighbours' land mark, with an army if need be behind them. Many a chief and retainer in the courts of the Princes still sighs for the good old days of *mulk-geri* and the long spear with lacquered haft that brought good luck.

The *Chandrawedis*' methods are simple enough. A favourite device in a crowded bazaar is for three or four of them to start a brawl in the vicinity of the traders whose booth they are bent on looting. A crowd assembles and the vendor must needs leave his stand to see what is in progress, and then the *upardar* fills an innocent bundle and perhaps hands it to a *chawa*, a lad standing ready to cut off with it. If the lad be caught the *upardar* will come up and plead for the naughty urchin, urging that he be let go with a cuff.

A party of *Chandrawedis* will proceed to a bathing *ghat*, where a crowd of pilgrims are bathing. Two or three of them will bathe and one will lurk. Then one of the gang may draw attention to some object of interest or feign to have seen something. While all are wondering or gazing, the bathers' trousers and valuables will have disappeared. They constantly engage as assistants in trade to gain knowledge and confidence and how best to rob their employers. In fact countless and simple are the devices of this thieving folk, joining marriage parties, thieving bundles in the crowded third-class trains and the like. A *Chandrawedi* will often disguise himself as a woman and travel in the third-class woman's carriage and carry on his trade.

The same confederacy carries on its role in the United Provinces under the name *Sonoría*, but it would seem that this term is strictly only applicable to men of Brahmin class who have become *Chandraweda* thieves. It will be seen that all their ways are only those known



to the police in every country, but it is the good organizing of the mechanism, *plus* the semi-religious aspect, that as in the case of the Thugs, has given to the order a motive for its efficacy. Incidentally it may be remarked that the ordinary public often uses the older and more notorious name of Thug for the community of *Chandrawedis*.

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## CHAPTER IX

### STRANGE THINGS EAST OF SUEZ

PEOPLE OF THE CIRCUMCISION—PECULIAR CUSTOMS IN MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY—BARBERS AND THEIR USES—DAIS AND WET NURSES—THE METHODS OF VOCAL ABUSE—STRANGE WAYS—CONCERNING CHILDREN

#### THE CIRCUMCISED

CIRCUMCISION is the proper and accredited rite of the Moslem and as among the Jews held in equal esteem, and carried out as a religious ceremony. In ordinary course it is carried out with reasonable surgical and medical precaution. But it is very otherwise when prisoners of war of non-circumcised races are "forcibly converted" to Islam. The rite is then carried out before the jeering conquerors with something of the methods of a "cheap and chippy chopper". During the atrocious Congress-and-*Khilafat*-bred Moplah rebellion of 1922 in south-west India, hundreds of Hindus were massacred by the simple method of laying their necks on the curbstone of their wells and chopping off their heads into their own wells. Hundreds of others were cruelly circumcised, always under aseptic conditions, a difficult operation on the adult, and when thus done a matter of torture and often of death. The careless suffocating of several Moplah prisoners in a railway van by the police was not improbably but a riposte for those atrocities. The ultra-venomous in the Assembly tried to pass a vote of censure on the Government for what they were pleased

to call their "repressive measures" against the fanatical Moplahs. A venerable Madrassi Hindu, who might often be found among the sensation-mongers, went into the Government lobby. Afterwards one of the Viceroy's Council said to him :

"I was very glad to see you were able to support Government, Mr. Appaswami."

"Yes," replied the Hindu. "Much as I dislike repression, I dislike circumcision more."

Circumcision as a male rite enjoined by Moslem and Hebrew sacred law, had no doubt for its origin, the sanitary advantages in hot climates, and probably a greater freedom from contraction of venereal disease. But there is another and most surprising form of circumcision, practiced by some of the Indian jungle tribes on women. Sir Richard Burton also refers to it in his introduction to the Arabian nights and that is the circumcision of females, presumably when juvenile. The operation consists in clipping the lips, the *nymphæ* or the *labia minora* of the *vulva*, and the origin is believed to be with the idea of lessening desire, one of these wisdoms of the tribe of Flynns aforesaid, in effect a barbarous and quite unnecessary operation by any count.<sup>1</sup>

Another strange custom of certain wild tribes on the lower Indus is a measure of infibulation analogous to the circlet of chastity with which crusaders secured their wives during their absence, circlets to be seen in the museum at Venice. The particular measure taken consists in closing the same portion of the feminine anatomy with a split ring. A religious taboo and a belief in dire results inhibits the women from the removal of the constraint. There, however, is no information that the custom of Africa and Abyssinia

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<sup>1</sup> In Abyssinia and among Australian aborigines, the practice is more thoroughly developed, in certain cases as a measure of pre-matrimonial purity.

followed of allowing the cut edges to grow together as an infibulation till time of marriage when they are reopened.

It is, however, curious that Sir Richard Burton, whose MSS. for his great work on homosexuality in the East was destroyed by his widow to the great loss of science, held that this operation on males did tend to dispose men to this terrible nightmare, for reasons however that he was not able to produce. He had noticed that it was in the countries and among the races of the circumcision that it was so prevalent.

Circumcision should be carried out between the ages of seven and twelve, but is permissible on or after the seventh day after birth. The operation is usually performed at home, but in places the boy is taken to the mosque and the rite performed outside the door. *Rabi* is the propitious month in India for the rite, which is regarded as a wedding and is often called *shadi*, and the ceremonies are of the same type. The child is dressed up like a bridegroom and if the operation is to be performed on him alone, the top of an earthen jar is knocked off at the same time, presumably to distract attention. The child is often given some intoxicant to prevent his feeling the pain of the operation, which is usually carried out by the barber but sometimes by the *abdul*, the professional horse and cattle gelder. In some parts the mother stands by with a *Qoran* on her head. If the boy cries, those standing by drown it by saying "Hail Moslem thou wast an unbeliever." The foreskin after removal is generally buried, but is sometimes dried and remains as a charm, while in Delhi it used to be tied together with a peacock's feather to the boy's foot so that no one's shadow may affect him. This custom, however, has died out or is dying out. The child's sister and his father's sisters are usually present and in the Punjab they sing a chant

which draws attention to the importance of women on such an occasion. It is curious that there is no mention in the *Qoran*, as in the Bible, of this rite, and no ceremonies are prescribed, but it is universally recognized as *Sunnat*, viz., founded on the custom of the Prophet, while round the orthodox ceremonial observances as in marriage many local observances have been added.

The omission in *El Qoran* however, is no doubt due to its being the national custom long before the Prophet taught. Among the Arabs whence the Islamic customs arise, it was in earlier times a pre-matrimonial rite carried out, not in the presence of the females of the family but before the "intended", who if her betrothed flinched, refused to marry him. This explains the normally inexplicable passage in Exodus iv, 24 to 26, and the conduct of Zipporah. Moses had not been circumcised and therefore God was displeased. Zipporah performed a vicarious operation on her son, throws the foreskin at Moses *pudenda* (feet is a euphemism) and says "now you come to be as a bridegroom should, bleeding." A strange story, furiously life-like and redolent in colour, like so many of the half-concealed meanings in Holy Writ when explained.

#### PECULIAR CUSTOMS IN MARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY

The orthodox Hindu marriages follow much the same sequence in all parts of India consisting of several ceremonies beginning with betrothal, and then the marriage as children or otherwise, and after that in the case of the married children the formal adult coming together which is called in the north *mukhlawa*. With each and all of these ceremonies dignified allusion to the importance of married life and the sacredness

thereof is the predominating feature, and it is only perhaps in the night of torment at the hands of teasing girl friends of the bride which the boy-bridegroom must undergo, is there hint of indelicacy. The important feature in the Hindu marriage is the sevenfold perambulation of fire, or of the mango tree, and the repeating of important texts. But in the outcaste aboriginal and other non-Aryan and expelled folk, the custom is to copy the Hindu way of marriage with sometimes dark and curious additions from other sources.

But it is in pregnancy and in child-birth that the imagination and mysticism of all that appertains to life and death, both among the high and low, the incaste and outcaste, has full sway. There are ceremonies of peculiar import and solicitous care which accompany every month of pregnancy both to stimulate the development of a male child, to ensure a propitious and easy delivery, and above all to divert the evil eye referred to and the demons, agog to do mischief at this special time. Among the curious and essential prayers are those due should a newly-married woman menstruate, and thus show some hesitation in the immediate conception, hoped for by all, that is to admit a waiting soul to its renewed race in the world.

The outcastes and aboriginal races who have any claim to a space in the shadow of the Hindu umbrella, also follow the orthodox uses in these matters adding thereto from their own remote origins. The umbilical cord is an article on which as in many lands much store is set, as with a caul in the West. Even to-day is a caul advertised for sale occasionally in the daily press.

In the matter of rites and ceremonies during the pregnancy, the habits and customs vary immensely through India, but all have the purpose of seeing the

wife through the anxieties and difficulties, fears and dangers of each stage. A woman whose previous children have died must always be careful, and the first stage of precaution is the third month. On the Indus a piece of iron from a sunken boat is procured and made into a manacle which she wears on the right leg.

There were in the hills special ceremonies when the mother first realizes that the child is alive within her, and in all cases and places mid-pregnancy is an importance. In every case of all these ceremonies, rituals, purifications and special garments are the rule, and now and again a suspicion must arise that the Brahmins from time immemorial in addition to genuine rules of health of which they may have been the custodians, find that the ceremonies which they conduct or are concerned in, are "a very pleasant income thank you". The singing woman of all classes who get fees or a free tea by chanting on all occasions have been referred to, especially the terrible case in which several of them so recently as April 1932 in the United Provinces sacrificed a girl to Kali to cure hoarseness which would interfere with their emoluments.

In the seventh month, that month of ill-omen and premature delivery all the world over, there is a precise ceremony known as *kanji*, or *rit* in the north. In Hindu circles it involves feeding of Brahmins and the bride's parents contribute food for that purpose, while the prayers for a son are earnest and efficacious. In a first pregnancy particularly is the seventh month ceremony important and demons and folk with evil eyes are specially to be guarded against.

Among good class Mohammedans in the Punjab, is the rite of *Gudd-dena* performed in the eighth month, when the midwife brings fruits to the expectant mother who must receive it dressed all in red, and the *dai*

(midwife) then foretells the sex of the child. But as all mothers as a rule want sons, it is not to be expected that the *dai* makes the unpropitious prophecy of a daughter even if she has any sort of power of gauging, which, of course, the ordinary *dai* would not have. Yet there is knowledge in the East empirical and founded on little known data that does produce uncanny foretellings of sex.

Eclipses are dangerous occasions during pregnancy and the wife is wise who keeps her bed and sees nothing of them. Any form of printing or marking during an eclipse by either parent must be avoided lest the child bear the imprint also. Abortions, if there are previous cases, are less prevented by recourse to a *syana* or wizard who will save the woman from so dire a happening by giving her a piece of wood from the scaffold on which a man has been hanged, or a *pice* thrown over the bier of an old woman, or a piece of tiger's flesh or a tiger's claw.

Mchammedan and Hindu fears and precautions vary as well as those within the different provinces, and it will be realized what happy times wizards, quacks, astrologers, *pirs* and Brahmins have in the agonies and fears of the people. And yet it cannot but be admitted that these things to give a colour and interest to the daily round that the West largely loses. How exciting in a quiet side street if the wizard arrives with pipe and tabor with the pieces from a scaffold, escorted by the children of the alley !

#### DAIS

*Dais* or *dhais*, the midwives, the most invaluable of female servants of the people are an outcaste folk, being usually of the Chamar race whether Moslem or Hindu. The males of the profession are usually tailors



or musicians. They are an indispensable adjunct to childbirth, for all Hindus of any caste have the greatest objection to cutting the navel cord, in fact a strong term of abuse addressed to a midwife is to call her *narkata* or "cordcutter". The better class Hindu families maintain their own *dai* who like a *perohit*<sup>1</sup> is a privileged person and may enter female apartments at any time. Moslem women generally prefer one of their own creed but will accept, if need be, either a Hindu or Christian *dai*. It is in the latter aspect that hope for better maternity lies. Christians can be trained but the ordinary *dais* are supremely ignorant and have no sort of training though many movements for improvement exist. Cord-cutting by the outcaste woman is usually one with a bamboo, which when dried, and smoke-hardened is as sharp as steel.

Fortunately, for Indian woman, parturition is usually easy, save among the secluded high-caste women, or they would never survive. The poor usually attend to each other and only need a low-caste cord-cutter. The difficulty of nurses in India is the caste prejudices that prevent women of standing taking up the profession. It is to be remembered that the *dhobi* a washerman, a gentle and respectable person must be of the outcaste races because he handles puerperal and menstrual clothes, in fact for the latter it is usually a sweeper woman who alone will make at any rate the first wash.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that impurity rules are hampering the medical profession. Indian doctors dislike conducting a post-mortem on a low caste man but will stand by and give instructions to a sweeper who handles the knife. Poor India !

The remedies and medicines of the *dais* are entirely empirical and worthless, and by no means all are

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<sup>1</sup> Family priest.

harmless, yet the mother gives herself into their hands with great resignation. Forms and ceremonies are many which hamper good nursing, while the expectant mother is usually removed at the last moment to an outhouse for delivery, accompanied by her *dai*, and neither hygiene nor comfort receives attention, while complicated precautions against the evil eye and ill fortune to both mother and child are equally obstructive to well being.

There are many superstitions which naturally vary in different parts of India. One very generally held is that if a woman has a succession of stillborn children it is the same child that returns again and again. If this is suspected the body of the dead child has nose or ear removed and is cast away on a dunghill.

Happily the efforts of successions of Vice-reines have done something to improve matters and as women come more into public life they are able to some little extent to forward movements for better arrangements and systems. Nevertheless from all that has been said of the tenacity of ancient ways and beliefs it will be realized how slow progress must be and how easy it is to arouse intense hostility among the very people it is hoped to benefit. Perhaps it is the Church of England Zenana Mission that has done most to improve the lot of motherhood by reforming *dais*. The village *dai* in her filthy garment and the trained modern Dai, still a village woman, still in the village clothes, but clean in clothes and clean in person, is an astounding contrast ; but tens of thousands more such are needed—one child in every three is born dead. The other side of the screen is that the fact that India has attained a population of 350 millions by its own methods and that if one-third of the children were not born dead, then the continent, already teeming, could not hold them. The dilemma needs careful thought.

## BARBERS

As in all simpler and less developed countries the barber is an important functionary in every rank of life, *Hajam*, *Nai* or *Napit*, are his usual names, hence the "Nappy" the name by which he is known to the British soldier, who likes to get someone to shave him. The social standing of Hindu barbers is higher than might be expected and Brahmins will take water in their hands despite their outcaste status.

The midwife is under the general control of the family barber and his wife and he performs the most important ceremony on all Hindu boys of shaving the head when the infant is from six months or a year in age. This shaving is supposed to remove the last taint of congenital impurity inherited at birth and is an event of importance in life.

The barber is important at the time of death, shaving the Hindu corpse before cremation, and he shaves the head of the man who is to light the pyre first. He is also ear-cleaner, nail cutter, cupper, bleeder, and boil lancer to the family, and in fact holds much the same position as the old barber-chirurgeon. He also holds the traditional position of match-maker and in the case of low caste families often acts as priest at weddings. The necessity for his being a man of trust and repute will further be understood if it is realized that most Indian women shave all the hair off the bodies and that it is usually the male barber who does it. In this connection will be remembered the disgraceful incident not generally understood, of the gold matchbox with a razor depicted thereon in enamel, which occurred in the scandalous "Mr. A." case, the recipient of the memento having rendered an English woman as like an Indian one as possible for the occasion.

Mohammedan Hajams, often called *Turk-nauwa*,

"Turkish barber" are of lesser status, and hold a considerably lower social position than among the Hindus. They officiate as dentists and nerve extractors and are also known as *Maskata* from their role as circumcisors. They also in many parts of the country perform the duty of the *abdal*, the gelder of young bulls. The women of the Moslem barbers do a useful business in the sale of *mantras* or magical formulæ against toothache, earache and the like.

To the European the Indian barber is a demoralizer, for the good barber shaves you while you sleep at early dawn, so that you wake up to find you are ready to go out. He makes the sleeper turn his head by gently stroking it or tickling the cheek.

#### THE METHODS OF VOCAL ABUSE

The less reputable East excels in abuse or *gali*, and most abuse especially on the Hindu side, applies to vilification of female relatives, and the relations of the abused with those who should be outside the pale of sex relationship. The most common form of all, common indeed throughout the whole East, near and far, though emanating from Hindustan, is the term *Bahinchute* commonly enough written in stories of adventure as *barnshoot*, which is the way it is pronounced to less keen ears. It means a sister's *yonis*, and by implication, an incestual relationship, a man who makes a habit of such. Even more damnatory is the second word with the prefix "Thy mother . . ." a still more insulting term. Unfortunately, Europeans use the first term often without knowing its precise meaning. It is a word which no European should ever use to any Indian, demeaning he who uses it as much as he to whom it is applied. It can only be excused in those moments when a powerful and impossible expletive does act as

a stimulant in a last resort. An amusing story is told in the shiny East which is illustrative of ignorance of its import.

The regimental orderly officer was making his weekly round of married quarters in a certain British barracks in India. As he went in and out of each quarter and exchanged a few words with the non-commissioned officers wives within, the doors were thrown open to him by an extremely quick and alert young native, evidently a servant to one or other of the married occupants. He remarked to the quarter master-sergeant who was accompanying him :

"That's a smart boy there, what do you call him?"

The reply came : "A very good lad sir, which his name is *Habdul*, but the ladies sir, they call 'im 'banshoot' for short."

The vituperative power of the Indian if need be, is great. There is an amusing story of John Nicholson in the Indian Mutiny trying with a dozen Indian troopers to cross a narrow causeway over a stream. An infuriated ancient hag barred the way whirling round her head one of those large swords with the whole steel hand as hilt, that is often seen whirled by someone in frenzy at the head of a Muharram procession. The bridge had to be crossed, and one of the troopers unslung his carbine.

"*Nahin !*" said John Nicholson, who wished the poor mad beldame no harm, "*Mat maro*, 'do not shoot,' *Gali do*, 'give her abuse'."

The trooper grinned and let her have it, to the fourth and fifth generation. The whole troop gasped in admiration, and the old lady threw down her sword, clapped her hands to her ears and fled. It was apparently a masterpiece of invective.

Moslem abuse takes more reference to unbelief and defilement or religious law than to reflection on pure morals.

"*Soor*", "pig" the impure beast of Scripture, is among the worst of terms, and again one indeed that an angered Briton should not use, for it casts a stigma and makes bad blood. "*Sag*," "dog", "*Sagparast*", "dogworshipper", "*Soorneen*", "swine face", pronounced with a hiss, are all fierce and bitter words. The lowcaste woman is of course, as elsewhere famous if enraged, and upset.

Those who are wise will keep abuse from their tongue, not only for the stigma that it confers but for the fact that in all cases some stain attaches to him who would use it. Even "*ulu*", "owl" as a favourite lesser adjuration is resented and "*pagal*", "half-wit", there are countless such in the Indian vocabulary, and most as has been said refers to female relations, and therefore not to be used by the *sahib*.

### STRANGE CUSTOMS

Apart from ordinary religious and tribal customs, in themselves often strange enough to western ideas, all sorts of weird habits and ceremonies will be found scattered throughout the land which are of intense interest to all who are curious in such matters. The legends involved or which are given as explanations are themselves often stranger than the customs, but they largely tend to give a tribe a higher status in public estimation than the true origin of the particular folk in question would justify.

Among the *Kandus* a grain parching caste in Bengal and Orissa, who also make and sell sweetmeats, jumbles and the like, is that of marrying delicate and deformed girls who cannot be married in the ordinary

way, to a sword. This is to avoid the stigma of arriving at puberty before marriage which is so black and impossible a stain on every girl high or imitative low. The marriage ceremony is a full one and is usually performed by a Brahmin officiant. The girls' forehead is smeared with red with the point of the sword. She then assumes all the ways and privileges of a married woman, and if married to a man in due course the ceremony is repeated. *Kandus* are a humble enough folk spoken of by the early English as "frymen" and the ceremony of the sword does not seem to be connected with any martial past.

Among the *Karans* one of the writer, or "*clerkly-werkly*" classes of Orissa, a sub-section, the *Nauli Karans*, have a strange survival. Apparently once upon a time the King of Orissa found two twin boys exposed and deserted, and he gave one to a sweeper woman and one to a washerwoman to bring up. When they were adult he was according to custom asked to decide to what caste they should be declared to belong. He considered that as no low caste parent would trouble to expose their children, they must either be Brahmin or *Karan*, the latter holding a high caste position. He, unable to decide, compounded, and declared that they were *Karans* but should be invested with the Brahminical thread. This was done and all *Nauli Karans* are so invested ever since, "*Nauli*" meaning "wearer of the sacred thread". Further when a lad is invested with the thread a post of *bel* wood is set up ornamented with shells, to which he makes obeisance and on either side of it stand a sweeper woman and washerwoman, in memory of the wet-nurses and fostermothers to whose care the caste owes its survival. It is to them that he really bows. When the high social difference between a *Karan* and such outcaste folk is realized the custom must be regarded as a remarkable

case of traditional gratitude and sympathy between the spiritually high and low.

An interesting little body in Eastern Bengal are the *Khwand-kar* who teach and write Persian but also gain a living as charm writers. For sick children charms are written and tied to the arm, while water over which a *Khwand-kar* has mumbled a few sentences is an admirable tonic. Rheumatism is most assuredly cured by dipping a *Khwand-kar's* charm in water, and drinking the water thus magicked. Moslems in Bengal like to have their children taught by so healing a fraternity, so that mind and body may be in good hands.

#### CONCERNING CHILDREN

*Les enfants poussent toujours*, in Indian life, especially among the humbler and outcaste folk, reproduction is astounding. The easy parturition is for all save the secluded women, the real devotion of wife to husband, and the ease with which children are fed, all tend to ensure that women shall be in the state of ladies who love their lords. Prolific as is birth, death is equally active, and as children get little enough care, the death rate is very high and those that remain must be largely the fittest.

A few years ago, a smallholder's wife near Delhi gave birth to five perfectly good living sons. The whole countryside, delighted at the portent, flocked to view them. In vain the magistrate posted constables at the door. The public insisted and the children died from the constant exhibition.

All Indian children are delightful even the beggar brats, and all have huge tummies swollen with rice and too often with spleen. To the English lady the little brown babies and solemn browned-eyed children of the compound are attractive enough. But they are



best let alone unless their parents bring them, because of the fear of the evil-eye. Should children who have been noticed by Europeans die, it is sure to be due to being "overlooked" in the opinion of all and sundry.

All Indians are devoted to children and eager for an excuse to stay and play with them. The English child is as attractive to the soldier orderly and the cavalry trooper as he is to his mother and nurse, and for this reason hopelessly spoilt they get.

I have always a vivid recollection of an evening in a frontier station, standing at the gate of my garden watching the high road and the passers by, with a golden-headed daughter of three in my arms. An old *Jatki* peasant came ambling along with a bundle on his shoulder having been shopping in the city. He was on his way to the open countryside between us and the great Throne of Solomon which towered away to the east. On he came *flip-flop*, in his great Punjabi sabots, *flip-flop*, *flip-flop*, and as he came abreast of me he stopped and looked. Golden-haired white children were new sights to him; he stayed to gaze and drew nearer. Then he remarked timidly:

"*Bahuti piari chiz hai Sahib!*" "They are very dear things, Sir."

It was a wistful remark and seemed to tell of a grandchild dead of malaria. Then he *salaamed* and *flip-flopped* home to his village in the *Daman-i-Koh* the "skirts of the mountains".

But it is not the children of white folk in the East nor of those of the better-to-do, but of the children of the strange folk, and those who do queer things who belong to this book. It must be remembered that no one in the East wants daughters. It is not logical, for the world wants women, and someone else's daughters are useful if your own are not. But there are

many reasons for the distaste for them, the duty and the trouble of finding husbands lest worse befall, the anxiety less they shall get themselves into trouble, the cost of dowry.

Deformed infants are often handed to mendicants. The *Mudavandi* are lame beggars who claim all lame children as their right, and are professional Shivites, they are subsidized by a wealthy land-owning class, the *Vellalas*, as a charity to take such children and treat them well. In the Punjab micro-cephalous children are vowed to a Moslem saint, Shah Daulat, and are known as "Shah Daulat's rats." They are kindly treated but are taken about as beggars. And thus does the East provide homes for its cripples.

Infanticide was for hundreds of years the appalling crime of India, principally that of girl children—who were either made away with or exposed. A century ago the British by-law and precept set themselves very strongly against the practice, which has almost died out. Fortunately, the real sympathies of the mother, if left to take the natural course, were with the Government in this matter. It was the economic and religious difficulties of marriage that were responsible for it. The trouble, anxiety and expense of daughters weighed heavily on the people. Within recent times all villages in the tribal hills have killed all daughters, to save themselves from being raided by neighbouring tribes in search of wives! An extraordinary form of a vicious circle. But though to a great extent infanticide has disappeared, those who really know aver that a good deal does still go on, and at best no attempt is made to help a female child that is not too wishful to stay in the world into which it has intruded. That the habit was still prevalent in fairly recent times is obvious from the great shortage of wives, and the fact that the out-caste women are always selling girls under false colours

and do themselves buy or steal and bring up girls for the very purpose of trading them as wives. Men at times roam over India to find a wife and are constantly the victims of some clever fraud, victims in that the women are not what they pretend to be socially. If the wife is a good one and nobody knows, it does not matter so much, but as feelings are very deep and genuine in the racial and caste direction the fraud has a very serious consequence which even if not discovered by the world destroys the Indians faith in his children and his home.

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## CHAPTER X

### CRIME AND ROBBERY UNDER ARMS

SERIOUS CRIME—DACOITY—MURDER—CRIMINALS AND PRISONERS—THE HORROR OF NANKANA

#### SERIOUS CRIME

Crime as such in India, as is only natural in a country so long disturbed, so vast and so varied and with such a history of wars and conquests is considerable. The prevention of crime is the work of Government as the result of a steady policy of improvement and uplift. The detection of crime is the work of the police and to follow the Indian police through some of their typical cases would alone be a large task. Nevertheless a few instances will show how strange wild and varied the vagaries of the races may be. The steady progress of a century has produced undreamed-of uplift, but it has not eradicated the propensities for “dacoity”, the Indian word for robbery under arms.

The Indian police of to-day, a very highly organized, trained and disciplined force, really dates from the Conquest of Sind by Sir Charles Napier and the semi-military Government organized by him for the first few years succeeding the annexation. He founded a regular constabulary based on his own experience of Cephalonia of which he was High Commissioner. His model was ere long adopted in British India which up till then had a most inefficient village watch system inherited from the Moguls, and relied on troops to do a good deal of the genuine police work. Since those days the police of India have gone forward from strength to strength and have gradually eliminated

round or disappearing for a while from home to do so, is one of the prevalent diseases in India. It never dies, it keeps the police constantly on the *qui vive*, and any weakening of the executive such as already stated has resulted from the so-called "reforms" at once means an increase therein. Ordinary fraud, other than the special and rather petty kinds as carried out by the criminal tribes, is rife enough, especially since there is a large number of university trained young men about who have a difficulty in finding a living. There is a very large amount of fraud connected with the selling of bogus banks and company shares among a very ignorant people, who are easily gulled with details of the wealth to be made by following the ways of the West. The selling of forged and false railway consignment notes is a very popular pastime. In India the Value Payable Post which is the Indian term for what in Europe is "Cash on Delivery" parcels post, lends itself to such fraud. The railway receipt for goods on rail is often sent V.P. and as the expectant consignee has goods waiting for him but the railway consignment note has not yet arrived, it is an easy matter to sell him a forged consignment note, or even one enabling someone to gain possession of goods consigned to someone else.

#### DACOITY

Here is a typical story of violent Indian crime, typical of the framework of the eastern mind and of the conflict of motives that must without control take place therein. It is a specimen of Dacoity, that robbery by bands of armed desperadoes referred to, who are still far too common, and who are not at all the product of the criminal tribes and races, detailed in an earlier chapter, but of the leaven of evil among the agricultural classes where strong men of active proclivities



CATTLEMEN OF THE WEST  
*Cattle thief and dacoit in posse*



A RUTH OF DRAVIDIAN RACE IN WESTERN INDIA



find crime more profitable than the steady pursuit of their humble avocations. It is one of the cases given by that experienced policeman of the days that are past, Edward Cox in *Crime and Police in India*. It is specially given here as it instances how little human life is accounted in eastern thought when it interferes with the individual's wishes. The locus is that very Sind which is now to be a garden on which the broad bosom of the Indus is to pour its waters, so that not two blades of grass shall grow where one was, but a thousand grow where none now are.

Two noblemen of the names of Bachu and Piru, were the leaders of a band of dacoits, gentlemen who lived at home and cultivated their own goobar patch, or worked for other farmers until such time as they had some definite plan before them. The plan on this occasion was to hold up and pillage the village of Chotiari, full of douce bodies whose hands could not keep their heads, but who had rupees in their houses ready to pay doubtless their revenues, and whose normal trader, moneylender and grain-seller was sure to have a fair amount of money in his till. Three Indian policemen were quartered in the village, not an insufficient number for ordinary duties but of no use in the case of armed dacoity. On a dark night early in January fourteen men with several arms surrounded the village, murdered two of the three policemen . . . terrorism is their chief stock-in-trade . . . and cut their heads off. They were indeed from the medical evidence, *actually killed* by decapitation, certainly in the case of one man . . . and then proceeded to loot the trembling villagers who, thoroughly cowed, made no resistance. The third constable who was not killed, stated that he had been deliberately spared and that the two leaders aforesaid, sent a defiant message to authority through him, a pretty story of brutality.



The prisoners were first arrested on the general opinion that as theirs was the only band known to be about, they were the probable offenders . . . and in due course, paid the penalty. But the law is not always promptly justified.

The gangs of dacoits sometimes complete coteries of men who meet for the purpose of a specific crime, and then return to their ordinary avocations till the desire for lawless action, and the old excitements seize them again. In other cases it is some well-known dacoit, famous through the countryside whose exploits are often sung of, who heads a permanent gang. The end of such is usually the gallows, for they are peculiarly ruthless, murdering often for the sake of murder. Bankers, traders, and moneylenders, are often their game, when torture is applied to ascertain where the valuables are. Women are often tortured also to say where their husbands keep their wealth. And someone is generally shot merely to intimidate and create an atmosphere of dread. The victims are usually far too pusillanimous to put up any resistance even if there is any chance of doing so with success. The house that is to be robbed is usually surrounded, and guns are let off to frighten the neighbours who usually lie doggo with terror. Old ladies are beaten and filled with red pepper, and it is quite a common thing to add insult to injury by raping the younger women. The leader in addition to being a man of considerable reputation, is possibly in the north famous as a *sodomite*, a vice which as has been said, seems in the East to go with reckless daring. It is usually the business of the armed police in the districts to hunt down the gangs, and many are the desperate occasions which ensue, for the service is one of great danger, and the captures made often redound to the credit of the police.

Oudh, or as it is now called the United Provinces

was long a hotbed of dacoity, partly from its vicinity to the inaccessible jungles of the Nepalese border, partly owing to the fact that only comparatively recently, compared with the rest of India, had it come within the mesh of British law and order. But Oudh is full of sturdy and often determined men, who prior to the Indian Mutiny were largely absorbed into the Bengal Army. Their almost universal share in the Mutiny resulted in their losing their place as soldiers of the Crown, and therefore losing the principal outlet for the more adventurous spirits. For generations it was the policy of the earlier British to absorb all the wilder young men of the district into military service, whether the regular army or the local and irregular troops. It is the putting an end to the trans-frontier enlistment which has of late years been one of the factors of frontier crime and unrest.

The further north we go the more venturesome the dacoits and vagabonds. In 1929 forty frontier lads surrounded a village dressed as frontier constabulary themselves, and having shut up or shot the local constables proceeded to clear out the wealth of the village, getting clean away despite a squadron of Frontier Cavalry set on their heels as soon as could be. A favourite frontier ruse for robbing an enemy is to have a whole family summoned into the magistrate's court by some fake message and then to ambush them on their way there, the blame to be put on trans-frontier raiders.

#### MURDER

Murder unfortunately, is a very common occurrence even in these more enlightened days. Quarrels over land, quarrels over women, quarrels over money are the common cause. The northern proverb has it that *Zār Zān Zāmin*, are the three pre-disposing causes

of all murders, "Gold, women, land" the fruitful incensity ! Jealousy of all kinds, and illicit love-making—the removal so to speak of one's neighbours landmark—is as all the world over, a source of the greatest trouble. Another perverted instinct is a great factor for evil in the Punjab and that is sodomistical jealousy, and the stealing away of another's catamite. From the recent reports on the Northwest Frontier comes, however, the story of a man accused of murder, the corpse of the murdered man being produced. The corpse itself was unrecognizable but it was wearing clothes that were well-known to belong to the alleged victim. It was a very serious case, and the accused, a man of a family at enmity with the murdered man's family, looked to be well on the way to the gallows. The evidence, all circumstantial as murder evidence usually is, was very complete and with the actual corpse thrown in, there seemed no way out. But there was ! For the last day the victim himself appeared in court not even knowing quite what was on, stating that he had been away to Kangra to look for work. He apparently had not been in the secret of the vendetta which his relatives were prosecuting against the family enemies !

Fear of and belief in witchcraft, is often the cause of the most cruel, heartless and revolting crime, as witness the police reports of a couple of years ago (1929) from Central India, of a humble household at Bhandara. There a woman, Mussammatt Gouri, was believed by her husband to be possessed of an evil spirit, and she was taken by him to another woman said to be possessed by a worse and stronger spirit. The two spirits then wrestled in fierce and repeated contests. The stronger spirit demanded the sacrifice of four fowls and two kids, which the two women, standing up to their waists in water, bit to death. The woman was then declared free and husband and wife return home.

Hardly had they got there when the other woman sends to recall them saying that she is attacked by Mussammatt Gouri's evicted spirit. They return and there is a terrible quarrel after dark, the other woman strips all Mussammatt Gouri's clothes from her, and tries to burn both of them. The husband of the latter woman, terrified out of any manliness, escapes and climbs a tree where he remains till the morning. Coming down at daylight in fear and trembling, he then descends to find his wife dead, with burns on her body and a hole in her abdomen. It is found that all her viscera have been torn out and apparently burnt. The other woman affects complete ignorance. She is however found guilty of the murder and transported for life. Another strange case from Central India in the same year is the murder of his *chela*<sup>1</sup> by a religious mendicant, a Bhairagi, by drilling him with the black-buck horn which he carried as part of his religious and mendicant's properties. At Seone the next year a man accused of turning the evil eye on another is brutally assaulted, and on his way to the police station to complain, is beaten to death by a few villagers. At Balaghat also in the Central Provinces in 1930, three Gonds deliberately killed another who they said was working magic against them.

Another story from Yeotmal is a strange one, and it certainly does not redound to the credit of the Hindu priest, the *mahant*, who was responsible for the harm. The latter had scandalized some of his parishioners by keeping a Chamar woman, that is to say a woman of the lowest outcaste race. This they not unnaturally considered defiling to the temple, and were bent on assaulting the *mahant*. The latter, though a Hindu, had a Moslem servant who protected him from his assailants. The indignant Hindus a day or two later shot the

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<sup>1</sup> Disciple.

servant, cut his body into several pieces and concealed the pieces in the crevices of the river bank. At Bankheri near Hoshangabad, a man was missing for several days and at last someone said they had heard groans coming from a tree. Too frightened to do anything, they at last told the police, who, on searching found inside the trunk which was hollow, the body of the missing man firmly bound. Life was extinct.

Professional jealousy is easily a cause for murder, for at Peshawur, a man in the Indian Army Service Corps, an artificer in the Heavy Repair Shops, was promoted over the heads of three others. The latter asked their fortunate comrade to a congratulatory meal and there strangled him.

At Seone in 1929, a case occurred with which one has some modicum of sympathy. Two boys killed an elderly man who they found interfering with a girl.

#### CRIMINALS AND PRISONERS

Anything on crime and criminals in India needs some reference to the criminal once he has been caught and been sent to gaol. Gaol atmosphere under the best conditions tends to produce some of the very conditions which it is designed to repress. Unfortunately the hot-air attitude which tainted good Liberal policy in England for a while has produced the Dartmoor folly—the class of folk who with the child would say: “mother see that poor lion has got no Christian” are allowed too much say. They can only think of the poor man who shot out both the policeman’s eyes when he had him on the ground, as one to be hung by cruel laws. But there is always room for sane administration on human lines, and this has been behind modern Indian gaol administration, although the problem is very hard to solve with the money available. The

problem of the old lag in India exceeds that of the western problem by just so far as the subtlety and curiousness of Indian underground life exceeds that of the West. The Indian gaol atmosphere is intense and tends to sweep up the new prisoner however trivial his own criminal instincts, into a special criminal caste of its own. The petty thieving housebreaking rogue of one of the criminal tribes for instance, or from the village outcastes absorbs like a sponge does water, a deeper and more subtle criminality. Happily this has been realized and every effort is made to keep first sentences and casual criminals away from the habituals.<sup>1</sup> It would be a long day's task to enumerate all the evil ways that the subtle habitual Indian criminal, who can probably never rejoin his own class again will teach to all and sundry. Mention has been made of the uses that the orifices of the body are put to by the criminal tribes of both sexes in concealing stolen money and jewellery. In the gaols they learn a new variant. Among the curious tricks is that known as "pouching". During his stay at prison it is a pity to acquire nothing of value, and the best trick is that of "pouching". A prisoner will wear inside his throat a lump of lead on a short string which he secures round a tooth, and this gradually creates by stretching, an invaluable pouch behind the *epiglottis* in the soft folds of the flesh. Prison authorities are always on the lookout for the men who are pouching.

During the World War, when labour was in great demand in Mesopotamia, the idea was conceived of bringing over Gaol Labour Corps, organized from the big gaols where convicts were allowed to earn post-war freedom by volunteering to serve. This, many thousands did, being officered by selected warders,

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<sup>1</sup>The old Indian lag has neither friends nor caste, and perhaps the Salvation Army are the only people who can handle him.

Indian retired army officers and the like, with experienced gaol administrators in high control. The corps were very valuable, both Crown and convict benefiting from the arrangement. This world of Indian convicts working in a semi-free but disciplined state developed a queer psychology of its own, and faults and movements which only men long practised in the Indian criminal and convict life could understand, counteract and give sympathy to where sympathy was due. Sex problems are always acute in convict life, and they are even more so in their eastern aspects and altercations, and these naturally took a somewhat different angle in the semi-free atmosphere of the war-time labour encampments.<sup>1</sup>

Incidentally it is to be realized that as yet throughout the East there is little or no interest in the human side of the criminal question outside British circles. The languishing and misery within an Afghan or former Turkish gaol for instance is beyond belief, and on a par with the other typically eastern institution the Soviet dungeon, while the good Afghan way of chopping off a hand or a foot, but adds to the tally of beggars. But the East breeds crime as freely as the hot soft winds breed exotics and rank weeds, and in ways that are always new. There is even more to say in the East for the view of the auld Scots law-lord in *Weir of Hermiston*, on the hanging of habitual criminals whom nothing will reform, than in the West. The East has always thought so, and does not understand the human solicitude of British methods.

#### THE HORROR OF NANKANA

The strange dynamic possibilities which underly the unbalanced Indian character has from time to

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<sup>1</sup> Lt.-Col. R. B. Lane, I.M.S., C.I.E., C.B.E., a very experienced prison administrator, was in control of this strange yet distinctly human useful war-time movement.

time had bitter and pathetic expression, always at a time when British Government has been unnecessarily paralysed. For generations the classic example must be Cawnpore in 1930 where the Hindus fell on their Moslem neighbours and destroyed adults and children in large numbers in a few hours. Children were torn limb from limb, infants unborn cut from their mother's womb, a favourite eastern atrocity, and every form of insensate massacre and murder practiced, so that the total ran to many hundreds, augmented of course by the reprisals by the Moslems as soon as they realized what was being done. If you have ever seen the corpse of a woman from whose abdomen the unborn infant has been cut to make an Indian holiday, you will realize how undesirable such things are, even to the glory of Gandhi and Congress. The official report of the incident by the joint British and Indian Committee of Inquiry is one of the wonders of modern civilization. When riots are rife the butcher from the bazaars is always active, and of a ruthless disposition so that the favourite eastern atrocity of slicing off women's breasts is an easy task to them with their long fleshing knives.

But the Cawnpore tragedy is itself too long to explore here, and a more dramatic and typical horror, and one which comes better within the category of crime is the Horror of Nankana. It also illustrates forcibly as does Cawnpore, why the administration in India must not be allowed to sink into inefficiency. It will be remembered how after the attempted rebellion in the Punjab in 1920 and the good King Amanullah's attempt to turn it to his own advantage by invading demobilizing India, the British and Indian Governments lost their nerve. The saviour, whose name was a name to conjure with among the Punjabis, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, was gone and a paralysed administration had



taken his place. That such a thing could ever have happened in the land that John Lawrence rebuilt, is one of the marvels of history, but strong provinces need strong leaders. There had been in issue for some time a perfectly natural development within the Sikh religious organization. The Sikhs are but a small coterie of folk barely three million souls, but a virile and vocative proportion of the twenty-five millions in the Land of the Five Rivers. No religious system as handled by man seems to be able to run smoothly without schism and faction, and Sikhism is no exception. It is not possible here to rehearse the Sikh story, but suffice it to say that the simple teaching of Baba Nanak of the time of Martin Luther, developed into the martial body of the Singhs under the Tenth Guru, the leader famous in history as Guru Govind. But all the Sikhs or "disciples" did not embrace the fiercely evangelical teaching and rules for a military theocracy, that animated the Singhs or "Lions" as the followers of Guru Gavind were directed to style themselves. Sikh shrines and temples remained of two kinds, those in charge of "*Mahants*", or "*Abbotts*", usually non-Singhs, who were Nanaki Sikhs, and the regular Singh shrines of which the Golden Temple at Amritsar is the centre. At the former worshipped both Singhs, Nanaki Sikhs and also miscellaneous Hindus, though neither Sikhism nor, at any rate, its development, can be called, except by backsliding, in any way, a Hindu religion. In the Sikh revival which had been in process for some years and which the war fostered, the head "Singh" Temple at Amritsar and its supporters with other Singh shrines, were concerned that the *mahants* were misleading the faithful and were not maintaining the great principles and rules of Guru Govind. Further, the great irrigation policy of the British, had made the waste lands whose

usufructs in temple hands formerly just maintained the *mahant* and his assistants, were now of great value, and the *mahants* commanded and irregularly controlled considerable revenues and sometimes led scandalous lives thereon. The Singhs and their dominant societies were endeavouring to get control thereof. It was a difficult ecclesiastical problem, resembling many that have agitated the religious systems of the West in times gone by. The existing situation was that which the British had found after the Annexation of the Punjab in 1849, and they had confirmed the customs and land grants in existence in accordance with the wishes of the people and customs of the time. For seventy years this had filled the bill. What was now wanted was for the Sikh community to make up their mind as to what they now wanted and propound a new law, or else work within the machinery of the existing courts. There was no other way out, and if the Punjab Government had not been montagued and paralysed it would have made this clear to all and sundry. Instead of this, it allowed a movement to develop, and an organization called the *Akali Dal* the Army of God to arise, with the avowed intention of waiting neither for laws nor courts, but to seize the temple lands and expropriate the *mahants* by putting in Singh priests. The situation was admittedly a difficult one, and a timid Governmental policy, so far as law, order and the maintenance of existing rights went, was certain to be fatal. The fact, however, that Sikh opinion had not fully crystallized and that the lawyers were anticipating a harvest did not help matters. Thus a defiant, lawless and entirely improper attitude of the Sikhs towards their own problem was arising owing to the obvious reluctance of Government to grip the situation. The militant Sikhs were admittedly talking of violence and seizure. The *mahants* themselves were naturally apprehensive. Without further

attempts to unravel the complicated situation, we may now turn to the story.<sup>1</sup>

The reforming Singhs had long had the great and wealthy Sikh shrine at Nankana in their eye. Nankana, the reputed birth of Guru Govind, was naturally of immense importance, and it was in the hands of a *mahant*. By canal irrigation the temple lands had become exceedingly valuable, and the annual income was something in the region of half a million rupees. Obviously this was a test case worth fighting, or a prize worth seizing, and lengthy law suits of the "Wee Free" type were not a pleasing prospect.

Rumours that the *Akali Dal* were about to jump the place were sedulously set about. The usual faith in the Government to preserve law and order had been grievously shaken, nor apparently do the local magistracy seem to have had the normal prestige, or information as to what was in progress. The *mahant* nervous, but determined, actually entertained for his own protection a force of Pathans, Moslem tribesmen from the Frontier, who are always ready to take part in any trouble, and who roam at will in the Punjab. This abbot had repeatedly applied to the Commissioner of the Division for protection. Instead of getting a definite assurance he got the feeble advice to apply to the courts for an injunction. Of what use was a court injunction in an electric situation? However, the news of the hiring of the frontier ruffians did make the *Akalis* hesitate. But the *mahant* was *very* nervous, and on the 19th February, 1921, he was on his way to Lahore to attend a meeting of the Nanaki or non-Singh Sikhs, a perfectly suitable proceeding had the Government been functioning. But on his way to the station a woman called out "*The Akalis are coming.*" He went

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<sup>1</sup> The whole tragedy and problem is adequately handled in *The Punjab of To-day*, by B. K. Trevaskis of the Indian Civil Service—long a district officer in the Punjab.

back and learnt that a band was in the district, which was actually a band of about a hundred, marching from one meeting to another who intended to worship at Nankana on the way, in the early morning. There was it is believed, no intention of seizing the shrine, though no doubt much tall talk in the villages. That this was so was the opinion of the *mahants* own party, and therefore probably true enough. The shrine was in a masonry court-yard surrounded by cells and shelters for worshippers with flat roofs. The Singhs arrived before dawn on a cold February morning, and the *mahant* highly alarmed, jumpy, but hysterically determined, had his guard of desperadoes arrayed on the roofs and round about. The pilgrims, for such in this case and for the moment they were, marched in peaceably enough through the great wide open gates. These were unexpectedly slammed on them and then began what was the most astounding and unexpected onslaught which turned at once to massacre. The Pathans, many of them armed with rifles, opened fire from the roofs in the dark. The unarmed *Akalis* thoroughly broken up and cowed by this fire in the dark and with no means of escape, were then set on by the Pathans, with swords and knives. A few took refuge in the Shrine, but a hole was cut in the wall and rifle fire poured in. The sun was now up and a ghastly scene lay before its early rays. There were no survivors. All the Singhs were dead or dying, and on to the heaps without mercy or thought for the wounded, innumerable tins of kerosene oil were poured and set alight. Outside the world but knew of the shrieks and rifle shots and the blaze of the funeral pyre. A vast pillar of stinking smoke arose from within and the stench of the burning corpses was appalling. The terrified hysterical abbot sat on the roofs, powerless to control the devil he had raised even if he wished to. The number sacrificed could never be

accurately told, but it was somewhere between 88 and 135. Incidentally, it was a convenient way of accounting for the disappearance of any murdered enemy to say he was in this particular holocaust.

Scandalous tales stirred the countryside of a Moslem courtesan cheering on the swordsman, and were probably true enough, bravadoes have such in their train and *mahants* have not been above suspicion—together the most terrible story of modern times. The trial that ensued and excitement engendered were no credit to any administration, but however much authority was to blame, it is obvious that the situation was so unforeseen that all and sundry may well have failed to realize how such tender might ignite, while even those with better knowledge would hardly expect so terrible a denouncement. Nevertheless it is a solemn warning against sloppy administration on the one hand, and Indian hysteria on the other.

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## CHAPTER XI

### DARKEST INDIA

EUNUCHS AND PERVERSION—A SACRIFICE TO KALI  
—BLACK FESTIVALS IN DRAVIDIAN INDIA—  
HUNGRY KALI—THE APPALLING STORY OF THUG-  
GISM—BOMB PARAST TO-DAY

I HAVE called this chapter Darkest India because some of the points herein depicted are incredibly dark, however bright and enlightened that country may consider itself on the whole. Eunuchs are but a small item but the old spirit that prompted their sacrifice remains. Perversion is a horror West as well as East, but in India is curiously enough mixed up with the religious question. The story of the sacrifice to Kali shows an unsuspected light on some depths of Indian character, while the horrors of Dravidian religion cannot be too fully execrated. The curse of Hungry Kali is so serious that it may sweep away much of the good side of Indian character and prompts the scene in the story told in Chapter XII. The story of Thuggism is outlined here, because it is most illustrative of an underground side of Indian character and in the opinion of men of great knowledge, it may easily return in an India that has lost the resolute mainspring from its policy. The story of *Sati*, of a murder of a child by seven singing women to cure their hoarseness, and the case of cruelty to a child wife, reported from the press of India of April 1932, all tend to show how near to tears lies some portion of the Indian potentiality. To get to a little hard facts might also be added a report from the press of Lahore on the astounding conduct of

their financial affairs of India municipalities as evinced in the report of the Indian Surveyor-general of the Lahore Government in May of 1932. It is as much one of the things pertaining to "Darkest India" as the story of eunuchs in women's clothes, or the sacrifice to Kali, and of the difficulties of pouring western ways into eastern moulds.

#### EUNUCHS AND PERVERSION

The making of eunuchs has happily largely disappeared, but by no means entirely, for they are still in request for the guardianship of the larger harems. Parents as a rule select this career for their children and the operation is performed by a barber of experience. That parents should do so is a matter of wonder to western ideas, but in this connection we should remember that that is how the wonderful boy voices were secured in days gone by for the Vatican choir. To this day parents of a boy with a wonderful voice in Italy will sometimes secure for him the certainty of a choral career by having this operation performed. In India it is usually done under opium. But in days gone by it was also done, as it was till a few years ago in the Imperial court of China, in the following manner. In that court a large number of eunuchs were always required, and were obtained by volunteering. When a youth was brought before the chief eunuch, and freely, and without restraint reiterated his desire to so transform himself, he was suddenly hit on the jaw, the knock-out blow of the boxing ring. Before his senses returned the operation had been carried out. The Chinese eunuch always carried about with him *ses precieuses* in a green bottle preserved in spirit presumably so that he might be complete for his funeral.

One of the strange tacit scandals of the life of the

old Dowager Empress of China was a semi-passionate and unusual attachment between her and the Chief Eunuch, Ngan-Te Ahai, one of the most remarkable stories of the remarkable life. Indeed it was this liason that was supposed to have enabled her to rise from the humble position of a Manchu *Kouei yen*, or concubine of the lowest grade, through the various grades of *pin* and those above, till she reached somewhat illegally the rank of consort. In Afghanistan for instance as in Persia and till lately in Turkey the manufacture of *khojas*, continues. But also in India that land of great wisdom cheek by jowl with strange diversions, eunuchs are made and flourish for another purpose. In Lucknow, in Lahore and Peshawur and indeed in other cities there is a street of male courtesans or rather eunuch-courtesans who dressed as women and farded as such, ply a strange perverse and demoniacal profession. It is a trade for which probably outcaste parents of a kind prepare their sons though the whole matter is an obscure one.

Unfortunately homo-sexuality in one form or another is very rife. In Afghanistan, especially among the nobles, it has been a by-word for generations as it has in Persia. It remained for the egregious British press, to go into ecstasies in the days of Queen Victoria at the Shah's affection for his little "boy friend", who accompanied him everywhere and whose role in life was happily unrecognized by Victorian simplicity, and the ignorance of the Queen herself of so horrible a vice.

In Afghanistan and in the frontier the shameless proverb runs "a woman for business and a boy for pleasure". Nor is such aberration confined to Moham-medans, for Sikh and Hindus are not free from the taint. The senseless murders which occur at times in Indian regiments and villages are often due to such unpleasant origins as sodomistical jealousy.



When Lady Burton, as already related, destroyed the manuscript of Sir Richard Burton's projected work on the subject, while humouring her own sense of nicety, she did great harm to the scientific knowledge of the world on a subject as old as vengery. Sir Richard happened to have travelled far and wide in the countries where it was and is prevalent, and was of opinion that it was to a great extent the vice of the circumcised which is possibly the very reason that the operation was not deemed necessary to Christians. One remarkable fact remains that needs accounting for. While in the West homo-sexuality or pederasty is the sign of the degenerate or mentally unstable and accompanies the disappearance of manliness and self-respect, in Asia it is often the vice of the most resolute characters. The frontier outlaw-in-chief, the last word in daring and reckless courage, is often an eager addict. On such anomalies as this Burton's work may have offered a theory. In any case *de gustibus non disputandum*. Unfortunately, the most otherwise reputable of Eastern friends and conferencers may be so inclined, and it is the one hidden cause which stood in the past athwart frank friendship between Eastern and Western men, till all chance of the failing is ruled out. The East would do well in spite of the urge of the Hindu temple records, to purge itself ruthlessly of this canker and relegate it from the category of a tolerated practice to that of a condemned vice.

In the description of the astounding indecency which to western eyes the temples of Conjeeveram, of Jaggnath and The Black Pagoda offer, mention has been made of the bestiality recorded, the mingling of humans and animals in intimate embrace. It has been explained that this has perhaps two faces, one the inhibitory sense that prompted the hideous gargoyles, the other the theory that every fantasy as regards procreation is but a

suitable way of showing enthusiasm towards the Lord and Controller of Life. Unfortunately in the East these sentiments and presentments do perhaps instigate the occasional bestial practices which are not unknown. Nor would it seem that public opinion at any rate among Hindus would take any cognizance of acts which are a man's own affair. But while the reputation of an amour with an outcaste woman would be fatal, the fact of some bestial inclination, if not applauded, would not arouse public indignation. Among some of the Moslem descendants of Pathan colonists too, occasional lapses of this nature do occur. Goatherds and their goats, the Sind donkeymen and their donkey are common knowledge. Happily such occurrences are not a public sight as they would have been on the outskirts of Baghdad at any rate before the British occupation began to set a more western standard. Then it was not an uncommon scene for a water-carrier to have intercourse in open day with his donkey. What so unspeakably mean, humble and vagabond a wretch might do, was hardly worth anyone's notice in cases where the value as between beasts and outcasts was likely to be much the same. The old adage holds good that if men are treated like beasts they will behave as such. But it is on record that the Aryans in their great horse sacrifice, the Asvamedha, recognized ritual bestiality with the *membrum virile* of the animal.

It was the common talk of Mandalay in modern times that Theebaw's queen, Su-pi-ya-lat, put her offending court maids to death by having them raped by one of the little Burma pony stallions. Not that the East has the sole stain of such things as those who know something of what is to be seen in Cairo and even in some Western cities will realize. The ancient religions did permit such terrible abominations, and India has always apparently been more openly acquainted

with such matters than the rest of the world. It cannot be denied that to keep themselves free of such evils and the ways of the countries they concurred, is one of the objects lying at the bottom of the exclusive system of the high caste folk, just as child marriage was probably adopted as a safe-guarding of female morals.

#### A SACRIFICE TO KALI

Mention has been made of the Indian conception of sex eternity and religion all deeply and truly interwoven. That is an attitude which all deep thinkers must accept, and need not be elaborated, but when we come to the astounding influence of Kali the wife, in one of the forms in which the feminine side of creation and destruction is deified and glorified, we get some very terrible and atrocious conceptions. Here is one of Sir Cecil Walsh's cases, which is but typical of much that goes on *sub rosa* and indeed but justifies many of Miss Mayo's worst charges. Too often in the world at large is a wife but a drudge and chattel, and especially in the East, and comely wives if so treated will seek consolation elsewhere. It is only one of the "'omely zort" who, as George Robey says, can be left to herself on a chair in the park and will still be waiting for you when you come back an hour or so later. The humble Indian drudge waits patiently but not so patiently if she be comely and hath admirers.

On the other hand the hard lot of the higher caste Indian widow already described, and the cruelty of national custom, makes for a very natural breaking out on the part of such, with often the direst consequences. This story is a widow story mixed up with strange psychological matter, and through it all runs the fanatical influence of a sex goddess, as told by Sir Cecil Walsh, the eminent Indian judge.

A certain Indian woman who had been divorced lived with her father in a village in the North, a simple soul, not uncomely, and eminently loyal and staunch, as the pitiful story makes clear. The accompaniments of the story are an uncanny temple of Kali the mother of sacrifice, wife of Siva, representing the cruel hard side of life. Kali is the patroness of smallpox, and she is often represented with dripping, gnashing teeth, her hands full of writhing human beings. She is a gargoyle in chief, a continual reminder of death and of disease and of the want of mercy in the inevitableness of nature. The priest and priestess of Kali are concomitants, and the scene comes to being, after a solemn trudge along the sandy bank of the river on which the temple stood. The chief actor in the tragedy was this young divorced woman in a northern village who lived in a mud hut with her father, her brother and his wife, humble enough folk. She was a vendor of dried fish but was really supported by a paramour, a wealthy man living in a village three miles away. Madan, that was his first name, often, so the evidence established, passed a night with her, and she occasionally visited him. It was also established that Madan gave her trivial gaudy jewellery. One day the woman was missing, later her remains were found and this is the tragic story that the court elicited. The woman was *enceinte* by him and asked him "what about it?" As Madan was not disposed to do anything she threatened him with exposure on the day of his daughter's wedding. The priest of Kali and his wife stated that Madan's mother had asked them to procure an abortion, not a common Indian practice. This was not attempted, but apparently Madan and his two servants, the woman, the priest and the priestess set out towards the temple where it would appear that the woman expected some act, religious or otherwise, to take place that would relieve

her condition. Half-way there, Madan and his victim stopped and an act of union actually took place in the presence of the witnesses. Shortly after this had occurred the procession moved on, the priest and his wife being ahead. Then Madan called to his servant, and the two with heavy sticks beat the unfortunate woman to death. Madan it was said, had visited the shrine immediately before. The woman's body was buried in the sand, and nothing more was said till the remains were found.

Here is Sir Cecil's description of the image of Kali. "Kali is the goddess of destruction and death. Her idol is black, with four arms and red palms to the hands. Her eyes are red, and her face and breasts are besmeared with blood, her hair is matted, and she has projecting fang-like teeth, between which protrudes a tongue dripping with blood. She wears a necklace of skulls, her ear-rings are dead bodies, and she is girded with serpents. She stands on the body of Siva, as emblematical of the male whose blood she has sucked."

To stand before this image and do some form of penance, or undergo what she believed was some abortional and highly suitable cantrip, the priest and priestess in attendance, this trusting peasant girl followed her paramour, and was beaten to death for her pains, the murderer having already fortified himself before the shrine, and with it all the marital act thrown in !

An astounding story, my masters ! showing us a depth of evil and mysticism, if it was not only sheer cruelty disguised by design, that the West and its Round Tables cannot fathom.

Justice was not fully satisfied, for Madan and his servant did not pay the death penalty, but went to penal servitude for life. The priest and his wife were sentenced as accomplices. Sir Cecil however thought

that they may not have suspected Madan's fatal purpose and really led on to the temple in pursuit of some abortion plan. The court, thoroughly stirred, thought otherwise.

#### BLACK FESTIVALS IN DRAVIDIAN INDIA

Interest has been aroused in some of the forms of religion in India by a recent appeal before the Privy-Council, where litigation between "the Gods" and their tenants has been dragging a course through various courts of law. The description of one of the parties of the suits as "the Gods" is not really so absurd, except in the matter of the actual phrase. Similar actions must often come before our courts, in disputes as to the actual facts and rights when land has been left or presented by private individuals to "churches". Such a gift might be to a general body of one of the "Churches" or towards the upkeep of some particular church or chapel. A pious donor might easily describe his gift or legacy as a gift to "God".

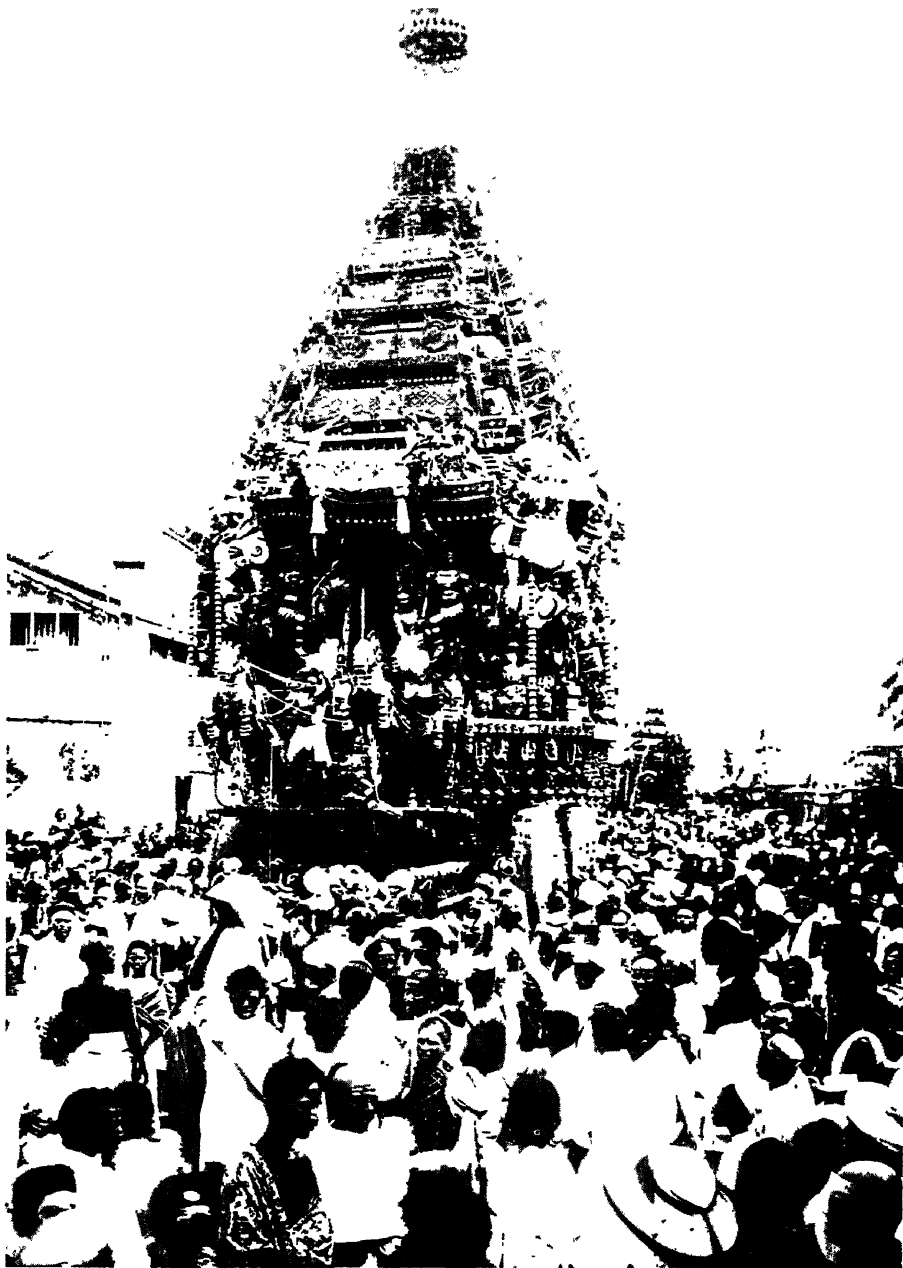
In Southern India among the Dravidian races, the ancient gods before the Aryan conquests and colonizations have in some sense as explained been admitted into the Hindu Pantheon. In philosophical or higher religious conception they would be considered merely as a local conception of one of the great Gods, who are themselves but persons of the great God of all. To village conception and local worshippers they are the very distinct personal gods of the village. They may be more than one, and some temple containing their images may often have lands given for the upkeep of the temple services and the attendant priests, and it was some such matter as this, and the rentals of the hereditary tenants of such land, that have been in dispute. When lands are given to the temple the prescriptive right of

the tenant to his occupancy is not disturbed and it is merely a change of permanent landlord. We see something of the same in England when lands were left to abbeys, and then they were given to laymen, and the story of the great and little tithe arose.

Great quarrels have arisen of late years in some parts of India, where land when given to a temple was barren and only gave some few usufructs and grazing for the priests' goats. Then has come by one of the great British irrigation schemes, the land has become extremely valuable, and the incumbents scandalously wealthy. The congregation then want some share of the increment.

The question of the debased Hinduism of Southern India, among the Dravidian peoples is a pressing one. It is not too much to say that the people live in fear, fear of the unseen, fear of demons, fear of curses, and fear of the anger of "the gods" of the village. Alone can the priesthood perhaps avert such terrible threatenings, and the priests do little to reassure their worshippers, lest they find less need to propitiate priest and gods.

Peaceful and contemplative as is usually the higher cult of Hindus and Brahmins, yet dark and terrible is the perversion in the South. The everyday scenes of worship themselves are repellent and terrifying. At festivals at which a kid is offered as a sacrifice, some giant black outcaste Indian will stand before the shrine, and tear with his teeth the bleating kid's throat. Covered in the gushing blood he will cast it aside and seize another from the next among the hundreds of eager worshippers. One man has been known to destroy a thousand kids a day with his powerful jaws, drunk with the hot blood that spurts over him. Gods that must thus be propitiated can but appear as objects of dread and wrath to an ignorant people.



THE ORNATE AND IDOLATROUS HINDUISM OF DRAVIDIAN INDIA  
"Carry your Gods and your Kings along"

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It is among such happily, who know little of the higher Hindu philosophy, that the mass movements to Christianity, which are in themselves producing great problems, are taking place. Christianity brings in its train great uplift for the oppressed and outcaste races, whose debased religion reflects so on the moral conception that animates Hinduism as a whole. Countless indeed are the forms of religion from the most exalted to the most debased, that shelter under that vast umbrella which the world calls Hinduism.

#### HUNGRY KALI

One of the most pitiful of all the manifestations of unrest and hatred among the implacable type of Indian intelligentsia is the strange underground movement among students, which has produced a secret bomb and revolver cult, and assassination society with secret initiation and ritual. It has produced its acme of pathos after a series of murders and attempted murders, in the shooting of the kindly magistrate who was listening to the complaints of two Bengali schoolgirls, trying to understand what was their trouble, when they produce revolvers and shoot him dead. Apart from the folly of handling which has allowed this movement to be developed in face of all warnings, there is behind it the sinister tradition and spirit of a peculiar aspect of the Hindu religion in its more popular form. Behind all the horror, cruelty, and sudden death of the world lies the aspect of Siva the Destroyer and his spouse Kali the goddess of all horrors. Kali among other aspects is the goddess of destruction, and death. In this aspect the idol in temples dedicated to her in black, with four arms and red palms to her hands. Her eyes are red and her face and breasts will be covered with blood. "*Main bookhi hun*," "I am hungry," is her cry.

"I want blood, blood, victims!" From matted hair to projecting fanglike teeth, her whole appearance is terrible and she wears the necklace of skulls aforesaid and hands often full of writhing victims.

In former days certainly within even the last century, in wilder parts her worship included human sacrifice. "*Main bookhi hun!*" "I am hungry."

As a mere reminder of our transitory sojourn on earth, such emblems no doubt have their meaning, and such deities their warning. Unfortunately the worship of Kali is a cult to which frenzied minds turn easily and blend allegory with fact.

The tragedy of the semi-religious murder of the *enceinte* paramour just related, is but one instance of how the Kali cult may bear evil fruit among the illiterate and evil-disposed. The effect that this astounding worship of Kali may have on human minds, is reflected in the rise of murder clubs with vows to mother Kali, attracting otherwise amiable and promising young men and women, infuriated by unbounded and unlimited false propaganda and hysteria. "*Kali Ma ki Jai!*" "Victory to Mother Kali," Kali who can and should be the incarnation of all that is joyous in the bountiful world, the spouse, the female side of the Siva, the Lord of All, the Creator, and the Destroyer whose aspect should be that of benign surveillance and dignified earning, is made to appear as the essence of cruelty. Not even the perverted imaginations of the Marquis de Sade could devise a more horrible nightmare than Kali Ma is made to represent in the temples and cults of Kali. To minds such as students vitiated and overstrained by the premature eroticism already referred to, added to the poison fumes of the Indian implacables, this presentment of the deity becomes a cult in which insensate and half-mystical murder may be a dominant thought.

In the days of Islamic rule, when the conquerors and emperors shuddered at all presentment of idols and images, the Cult of Kali was especially abhorrent, only permissible when kept within the strictest bounds. So careful have the British in India always been to let all religions, which are not hopelessly contrary to ideas of humanity, have the fullest freedom, that no form of Hinduism has come under control. The astoundingly cruel custom of widow burning, and the slaughter of female children alone has come under ban. At the present moment an intimate study of the aberrations that the worship and cult of Kali Ma, with reference to murder cults and bomb societies, can produce in an otherwise amiable class, is no doubt attracting the attention of the Criminal Intelligence Department.

#### THE APPALLING STORY OF THUGGISM

Among the many strange things that the British, the impure, accursed British of the Gandhi saga, have done to or for India is the destruction, the rooting out lock, stock, and barrel of the sacred cult of Bhowani the Goddess, as expounded by her followers, the Thugs, or *Phansighars*, the stranglers. The story is so astounding that it should never be forgotten. From the time of Akbar at least, but possibly for thousands of years, there had existed in India, unknown, but strangely suspected of the people, a widespread secret fraternity whose cult was the murder of the wealthy for the sake of their goods. For generations merchants, travellers, and others had disappeared, without their relatives having the least knowledge of what had become of them. They and their families perhaps would just pass out of existence. Now and again some prince or ruler might exterminate a gang on whom he had lighted, but merely an *ad hoc* extermination for crimes brought home. That he had

touched on a widespread organization of crime tinged with fanaticism, was never known even if suspected. Only in a country such a prey to rapine, war, and disorder, as was this continent of India before the *Pax Britannica*, could such a thing have been possible.

Many years passed before the British came to suspect it, but about the period 1810 suspicion began to be aroused. The word *Thug* had for long been a word of ill-omen for lawless theft and robbery, concerning which no very clear ideas existed. In that year the Commander-in-Chief in Bengal issued orders warning sepoy moving on furlough in small parties, to beware of Thugs.

Some facts had already been collected, and as early as 1816, Dr. Sherwood wrote a paper in the *Literary Journal* of Madras, which purported to reveal the whole story. This paper was later proved to be admirably correct in its description of the dread organization and its methods, and it seems rather more than incredible that the British had not put their hands on the problem earlier. On the other hand, they were busy with the settlements after the wars of 1803-5, and the disastrous effects of the Cabinet's and the Court of Directors' reversal of many of Lord Wellesley's policies, and the aftermath thereof, in the Mahratta and Pindari wars of 1817-19. The disorders in Central India due to the destruction of all responsible Government after the Mogul collapse, and the rise of those nests of land pirates, termed Pindaris, in the jungles of the Narbudda valley, gave a great impulse to the cult of Thuggee.

Law and order there was none, all merchandise and bullion moved by pack animals, and this threw many merchants into the hands of fellow travellers who might or might not be reliable. The Thugs had a golden opportunity, and in the numbers and characters of innumerable masterless men had a great field for recruitment.

What exactly, then, was this cult? It was a vast secret society which both Moslems and Hindus joined, based perhaps on some hatred of the wealthy and fortunate as persons whose prosperity should rightly be given to others, and immediately devoted to the conception of Kali, another name for the female side of the great Siva, Siva being, as explained, the Hindu *persona* of the deity in regard to life and death, birth and burial—that part of the Godhead whom men must fear and please in the daily duties and joys of life. Kali is specially concerned with everything cruel and hard, as well as much that was good and pleasant. Under her form of Bhowani, the Thugs rendered her homage, swearing their allegiance to her both as directress and protectress. Their cult was, in effect, the obtaining of wealth for their own personal use, and in the heart of every initiate there soon arose a sacred joy in depriving people of their lives for the mere sensual gratification thereof—a form, in fact, of Sadism, and of that unholy joy with which Soviet female executioners have put their prisoners to death.

It is presumed that at first the statements put forward by Doctor Sherwood, were considered too hideous and monstrous for belief, but several members of the Indian magistracy had begun to study the story very closely. By 1830 active operations against Thugs as ordinary thieves and murderers began, notably in Bundelkand and in Western Malwa, part of the districts in which the Pindari oppression had been so severe; but as yet no attempt to recognize the system and attack it as such, had been devised. Three well-known magistrates in Central India, Major Borthwick, and Captains Wardlow and Henley, had tried and executed many Thugs for the murders of travellers, but without any public attention being drawn to the crimes as part of a cult and system. At this time the

number of murders were so many, and the audacity of the Thugs so great, that the Government was forced into probing the matter to its roots. Several distinguished civil officers turned their attention to Thuggism. It was not, however, till the confessions of one, Feringhea, were received and analysed that an inkling of all that the cult stood for was gained. For some little time, as a mere matter of police practice, certain of those sentenced were offered pardon if they would peach on their confederates, but only in the hope of clearing up their special gangs.

The disclosures of Feringhea were so appalling and so incredible that at first the famous Colonel Sleeman, or Captain Sleeman as he then was, would not believe them. But as the confession said that thirteen of the victims were actually interred in the very grove in which Sleeman was camping, this led to exhumations, which only too truly bore out the Thug's revelations.

From this time dates the serious and organized campaign, and the formation of a special bureau which developed into the Thuggee and Dacoity Department—dacoity being that organized robbery under arms, which is still the curse of many districts, and into which India is only too prone to relapse.

It was found that Thuggism was rampant all over India, from the Himalaya to the edge of Ceylon, and east and west from Cutch on the Indian Ocean to Assam on the Burma border. There were few places in which the confessions of the informers were not verified by the exhumation of their victims. Special officers for the suppression of the cult were now appointed in various parts of India, among them being Captain Sleeman and Meadows Taylor, as well as others equally famous in their day.

From Feringhea and other informers the whole

machinery was laid bare, and it is from Feringhea's confessions that Meadows Taylor wrote with little expansion the celebrated *Confessions of a Thug*. The recent issue of this book in "The World's Classics" series, with a note by Mr. B. A. Stewart on the whole business, is well worth perusal by all interested in crime of a strange and inhuman kind, and of how the great police officers of the day dealt with it. They may also meditate on the ease with which such cults may arise again were at any time events in India to follow the course of those in China. Dacoity,<sup>1</sup> Thuggee's not too distant cousin, is as has been said always endemic in the countryside, as the annual police report on any one of the provinces of India will reveal.

The origin of the cult is lost in history and wrapped in mystery, and Colonel Sleeman thought that it might owe its origin to the early wanderings of Tartar and Mogul tribes, then pagan, in the provinces of India. The Hindus claim the divine origin of the meddling of Bhowani with the affairs of men, and certain it is that Thugs, whether Moslem or Hindu, observed Hindu ceremonies which undoubtedly pointed to a Hindu origin. It has been likened to the cult of murder and robbery known to exist in Persia in Sassanian times, and to that Old Man of the Mountains, the head of the Assasseens—a cult which, in its (harmless) modern form the Aga Khan is head. In any case it is a mystery not likely now to be unravelled.

According to their legend, the Thugs were a body consecrated by Bhowani or Kali to her service, sworn to protect each other, and observe certain rules and ceremonies, and to spend their time in removing human beings of wealth from the world, their wealth passing to the Thugs to be shared on a basis of equality and

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<sup>1</sup> Robbery under arms, often accompanied by crude terrorist atrocities and tortures.



brotherly love. New members were sworn in by terrible oaths and penalties, and were to be thrice faithful one to another. They were bound by their oaths to shed no blood but strangle their victims, and to be sure that all trace of their action was removed. Strangulation was carried out by a sacred silk handkerchief, in the use of which all Thugs were made adept. The initiated worked in gangs, with a perfected drill, and always consulted omens before any enterprise, which they abandoned if the omens were unpropitious. Before they started to carry out a murder, the *nishan* or burial pickaxe, which was the emblem of the Thug was specially consecrated and called *Khusee*. Meadows Taylor gives the invocation to Bhowani (Kali) before the gang started on their enterprise.

“Mother of the Universe ! protectress and patroness of our order, if this expedition be pleasing to thee, vouchsafe us thy help, and give us an omen of thine approbation.”

Then were the omens sought, the *Philao* on the right to be answered by the *Thiboa* on the left. The gang or its leaders would start as ordinary travellers, get into touch with travellers, render them services for days, be hired as escort and the like. They would be told off for their various duties . . . the *Bhutearis* who looked for a suitable spot for the murder and burial, the *Lughais* who dug the graves, buried the victims, and obliterated the signs, the *Bhuttotes* who did the actual strangling, with the *roomal* or handkerchief. Always was some sign arranged. The Thugs and victims would be at meal together, the *Bhutote* alongside his victims. The sign would be some such remark as “Bring tobacco” or “Bring *pan*,” and in a moment the victim would be on his face, the *roomal* round his neck, and the Thug making the twist of his wrist and thumb which finished the deed. Absolutely without mercy

were the miscreants. Whole parties, women, children, servants, young and old, beautiful or the reverse, with a Thug to each, would be dead on the signal and buried within half an hour in the *bhil*, as the selected burial grounds were called.

After each accomplished murder, the gang would offer thanks and consume a consecrated communion supper in honour of Bhowani. After the manner of the East, headmen of villages, state officials of towns and states, would be in the gang's pay, without perhaps, unless they were themselves retired Thugs, suspecting more than that they were local bandits who paid handsomely. Here and there some specially clever and courageous official would even blackmail them, and probably suffer for his pains.

Once the British Government realized what they were up against, and had placed officers of energy and experience on the track of the system, matters began to move. In the official report the working of the Department for repression between 1831 and 1837, resulted in 1,772 being dealt with, 412 being hanged as murderers and 1,059 being transported for life, a further 483 had been accepted as approvers and 120 more were under sentence and 936 awaiting trial. A special colony of approvers under protection was formed at Jubbulpur, where their descendants are to this day, and where any tendency to lapse can be watched. At the same period the Department was searching for 1,800 more whose names and crimes were known. The number of *bhils* or burial places that were opened and found full of bodies, often close to the most frequented halting places and even within cantonments, was astonishing, and it was estimated that many thousands had perished annually for many years, at the hands of this impious and growing cult.

The years of anarchy referred to had given oppor-

tunities beyond the dreams of prayer, and many recruits, as had been alleged in the first reports. For many years the Department of Thuggee existed and kept watch on this movement, lest it should show its head again, and also on various secret and subversive movements, subversive of both civilization and the British Raj. Eventually it was merged in the Criminal Intelligence Department, whose annals will make the most astounding reading in the world, in which crime mingles with Siva and Vishnu in a manner unknown elsewhere. The stories of modern Bengal secret murder cult and the Babbar Akali movement, of which Sir Michael O'Dwyer has given some account, are tinged with the same fervour that animated the darkest side of Thuggism. And it is just this presence of some ancient horror, existing beneath the outer surface of perfectly reasonable political aspirations, which has been a source of trouble to many a kind Viceroy desiring only India's good.

#### BOMB-PARAST TO-DAY

A "*But-parast*" is a worshipper of idols, a "*Sag-parast*" a worshipper of dogs, and a "*bomb-parast*" is one who has put a bomb in the shrine of Siva or Kali, that he may worship it and gloat with hungry Kali on the blood that may flow when he shall throw it. The murder trials that have followed on the seditious and secret murder cult in Bengal, and indeed throughout India, show in their records how the Hindu student depraved and often injured by too early eroticism, turns to the suggestiveness of the murder-monger, and worships the nitro-glycerine bomb as the apotheosis of his goddess. The bomb flung at Lord Hardinge as he rode through the streets of Delhi, killing his aide-de-camp, and plastering his own back with gramophone needles, was hatched in the niche of some domestic

hearth where the kindly Vishnu should have presided. The haunted young Sikh, who rushed a few months ago into the little English household at Lahore Cantonment, to kill with a sword the young mistress, and chase and injure her terrified children in the garden, amid the roses and the lupins, was but a victim of the *bomb-parast* that has been allowed by the hot-air merchant to penetrate peaceful life. The Indian police officer, himself a villager at his duties, Sir John Simon and his kindly Commission, Mr. Saunders, the best of police officers, the magistrate giving prizes to Indian school-boys, are but a specimen crop of the uplifting of hands before a bomb in a niche, in the *piscina* of some household, before which the little lamps flicker, where the lad is fed with the cult of the implacable. As Bhowani and Kali were the patron saints of Thuggism before which ruthless blood cult, young nor old, maiden nor matron, man nor boy were spared, so does the *sakti* of Siva shed her blessing, in the opinion of her votaries to those to whom Kali makes her cry "*Main bookhi hun ! Main bookhi hun !*" (Intone it nasally) "I want blood ! blood ! blood !" At Cawnpore she got it brimming over, the women's breasts sliced off, the children, Hindu and Moslem, torn asunder to make a Hindu holiday, by many hundreds. "*Main bookhi hun ! Main bookhi hun !*" So easily does this hysterical East with its perverted world cults, change from simple kindly humans, to demons.

The student and the assistant editor of the rag, that but exists to inflame students and pays its way by advertising the most potent aphrodisiacs<sup>1</sup> among them, are the nidus of the bomb-cult, and the show-room of the sour super-minds who conceive it.

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of the Indian Press, even the most reputable, find the aphrodisiac advertisement their principal source of income, as reference to their advertisement columns will show.

Even the most kindly may fall to this blood-lust, the saintly *Baba Gandhi* may at any time be afflicted like his followers at Cawnpore with this desire to destroy. Mother Kali, the goddess involved by Thugs, the Queen of Smallpox, and the *sakti* of all that is evil as well no doubt, as explained, of much that can be good in this incomprehensible medley, presides in many a niche that was built for softer and kindlier influences. *Kali ma ki ja !* (Victory to Mother Kali !)

## CHAPTER XII

### ROGUES AND VAGABONDS

CONJURORS—THE STORY OF THE CROWS—SNAKE  
CHARMERS—PIPE AND TABOR—VAGRANT MEDI-  
CINE—LOVE PHILTRES AND APHRODISIACS

#### CONJURORS

ROGUES and vagabonds of many kinds, indeed of countless kinds, are the feature of the countryside, and among some of the most attractive features too. A few of such have already been described, but their number is legion. Their business like all rogues and vagabonds of the performing kind, is to make a livelihood, often by an easy way, yet often too by ways that are extremely hard. Some batten on their own countrymen, others get most of their livelihood from the European soldiery or the European generally.

Let us first of all gaze at the *Tamasha-wallah*, the man who makes a *tamasha* which is a Persian word denoting "spectacle". *Tamasha-wallahs* are conjurors pure and simple, or may have performing animals, bears and monkeys, or are simply snake charmers. But the conjuror is the best of the *tamasha-wallahs*, and if the *Sahib* will see to the *bakhshish* part, then crowds of happy natives will supply all the seats except the stalls, and thus we may look at the *tamasha-wallah* and his outfit. He has come into your compound, with a small boy carrying his paraphernalia, and slung over his shoulder a bamboo, from which hangs a bundle on one side and on the other a basket with a snake or two. He

has given your servant a threepenny bit or what corresponds thereto, as a bribe to go and break it to you that he awaits your pleasure. Your servant will come deprecatingly and say "*Sahib ! Tamasha-wallah agya.*" "Sir, the Conjuror has come." If as is to be hoped, you are in a good temper, you will call to your wife and any children you may own, and emerge on to the veranda. Yes, there he stands under the banyan tree by the fountain, a queer old bird with a ragged goat's beard, a huge *puggarree* made of countless strands of what once was red rag. He salaams low, and approaches.

You say to him : "Have you good tricks ?"

He knowing that at the worst he will get a rupee and if he can please, two or three, is expansive—"He has every trick," *Bahuti atchcha tamasha sahib !* "Very good show, mango tree, duck in boat, fortune telling, putting that boy in basket, sah." He now breaks into broken English : "See that boy disappear, sah ! Very good trick, Calcutta-wallah, Bombay-wallah, London wallah, very good sah "

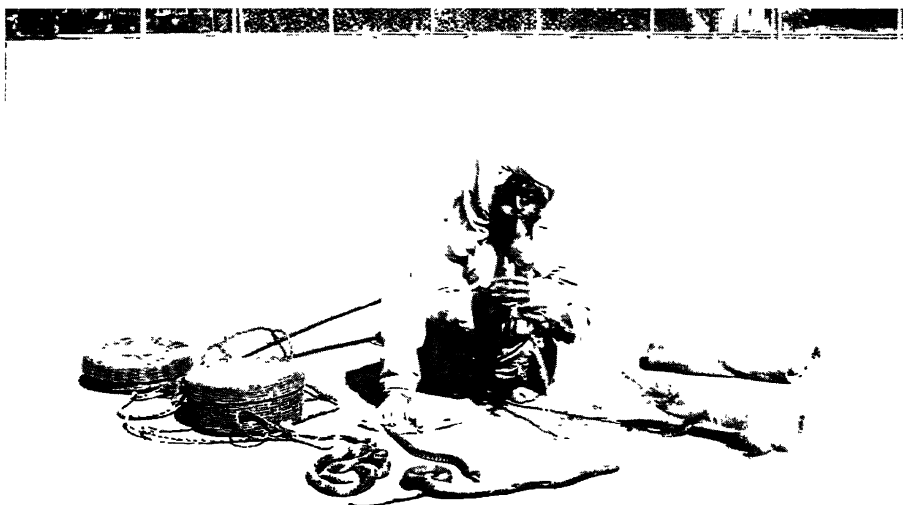
He squats and takes his bag from the boy, undoes he lid of the basket, produces a gourd flageolet and plays a weird rather haunting note. A cobra raises its head at once, and commences to wave it in time to the music. The conjuror pokes it with a stick and it spits nastily . . . he puts the lid on and produces a couple of yellow chicks which like the man at Port Said, the "Ello chick" man, appears in succession from various parts of your small son's anatomy.

There is a no need to follow him, the wooden duck in a bowl is produced which counts for you by bobbing and answers questions, and perhaps you notice that there is a horse hair fixed to the conjuror's big toe which does the work. Cards are produced and now and again the conjuror will consult a grinning monkey's skull,

SAMPERIAS (SNAKE CHARMERS)



THE COBRA-KING



RIKKI—TIKKI—TAVI  
SNAKE CHARMERS

*To face page 222]*





which appears to whisper answers in his ear, while he nods gravely and repeats the answer or advice. Then comes the mango trick, the planting of a stone in a heap of sand, whence covered from time to time with a cloth the mango grows and grows from stone to sprig and from sprig to bush and from bush to bear fruit. This is a wonderful *tamasha*, but is nothing but good sleight of hand. While waiting for the mango tree to grow, he diverts attention by calling the cobra once again from his basket, with more weird notes played with one hand. The other hand is busy while you watch the cobra and listen to his patter. The "Boy-in-the-basket" is more serious. The small boy gets into the basket, and is covered up by the lid then the man stamps on it, and runs a sword backwards and forwards till your daughter screams in fear. Then the pipe is played once more. "Never mind that boy, sah ! He made him mince-meat" till all of a sudden you see the boy laughing on the edge of the crowd. One boy is no doubt like another boy, but . . . is it hypnotism ? Probably.

The Indian conjuror is often something more than a mere sleight of hand man. He may even in days gone by have attached himself to some *sannyassin*, may have been a religious mendicant . . . and has without doubt, some of them . . . learnt something of the lost cults. He may be a hypnotist, and even something more despite his pandering for pelf. The famous rope trick where the boy disappears up a rope thrown into the air which remains vertical—no one to-day has ever seen it, despite the occasional declarations from correspondents in the press—so vertical and rigid does it remain that a boy may climb up it—if it had ever been shown as the Abbe Dubois declared—then it must have been hypnotism. But if there be such powers as enable a *gosain* to bring his long bowel from his body, air it and put it back, why perhaps someone has control

over a bit of rope. Yet there are men to whom conjuring itself is an open book who have searched far and wide to see the rope-trick and never found it. In the days of the Abbe Dubois when India *was* India anything might have happened !

Khandesh in Western India has been called the melting pot of races and religions, with a strong population of aboriginal tribes, the battleground of Moslem invaders and of the pre-Moslem post-Aryan races of Scythians, Tartars, Guja's Jats and Arabs, as well as swept by the Pindari freebooters of the Nerbudda in the eighteenth century. It is therefore full of bits and pieces, wandering fragments of castes and tribes who during the past have been driven homeless from their lands and villages, seen all they possess a heap of ashes—and in a hard world have become vagabonds from sheer necessity. That must be the history of many the casteless wanderers and account, perhaps for the stories of Rajput Khatri or even Brahmin descent, with which they endeavour to clothe their lowliness. The pimp and pandars, the sorcerers, conjurors, acrobats and mountebanks aforesaid, all seem to come from one or other of the outcaste tribes. Among these will be found the *Nats*, a wandering tribe of tumblers and acrobats out of Marwar, with a penchant, as have most of such, for wild boar and frogs or lizards on skewers, will be found on the outskirts of any fairs in western India often serving the owners of roundabouts rough-fashioned on those of Europe. Another lot from the same sink of derelict races are the *Sarvades*, fortune-tellers, who carry on their backs a one-ended drum the *hudki*, and an old almanack in their pockets from which they will predict happy days for weddings if the more professional astrologers are less accommodating. The almanack of the fortune teller is like that of the old skipper of a dhow in the Gulf who has a nautical

almanack, and putting on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, proceeds to impress his clients by reading from it upside down.

### THE STORY OF THE CROWS

There is no doubt that certain of the everyday conjurors do possess powers that are not covered by ordinary gifts and tricks as witness the story of the crows, which was related to me by a brother officer to whom it happened. By chance he had alighted at a wayside junction in Rajputana to wait for a train that would take him to a shooting ground that he had wot of, and had an hour or so to spend on a deserted wayside junction. Outside the station was a bare piece of ground with nothing but a thorn tree and a small shrine underneath it. A couple of hundred yards away was a bare ridge of rocks with a few clumps of prickly pear at its base. The stationmaster had gone back to his office to snooze, the single porter was sucking his hubble-bubble in the far corner, and the only other occupant of the platform was a squatting figure wrapped in a patchwork cloak with a nondescript bundle by his side.

As the *sahib* passed him he salaamed. Then he spoke in broken English. "*Sahib*, like to see good *tamasha*? I very good conjuror."

And the *sahib* said, "No, thank you *ji*, I don't want to see tricks, unless you've something quite new."

"How much *sahib* give me if I show something quite new?"

The *sahib* laughed.

"If you show me something that I consider really good and quite new, I will give you three rupees."

The conjuror salaamed again.

"I tink *sahib* very well pleased. *Ap tasharif bahr*

*lejiye*. Will the *sahib* bring his august presence outside."

The *sahib* agreed and the two went out on to the dusty ground behind the station.

"Not got him crows here," remarked the conjuror.

"Do you want crows for your trick, *hakimji*?"

"I bring him crows, *sahib* being pleased looking hard."

The queer bird, for a queer bird he was, took off his patched cloak, which stood stiff like a bell tent. He squatted in front of it put both his hands to his mouth and began to blow into them, making a weird shrill, sound, something as an English boy would make with a bit of green leaf or a blade of grass between the boles of his thumbs. The sound seemed to travel.

"Watch him crow," said the Indian.

The *sahib* watched wondering. There was not a crow to be seen anywhere. The shrill call continued, and the hot air which shimmered and in which dust devils pirouetted, seemed almost cool. Then there grew a black spot, a ball on the horizon which came nearer and nearer and then a pert crow landed, put its head on one side, hopped forward and peered into the bell tent. As the *sahib* looked in amazement there came another, and then two more. In a few seconds the horizon was black with hurrying spots, spots and dots that hurried from north, south, east and west, and crows began to land half a dozen at a time, hop and look at the patched-cloak bell-tent and hop away wisely. In five minutes more than a thousand crows with their heads on one side were gathered round. The *sahib* was amazed as well he might be. Not a soul was in sight. Only in a clump of trees a quarter of a mile away a conch brayed the hour of prayer from a small temple, and a bell sounded.

The conjuror sat quiet in the centre of the crows.

Then he got up and said deprecatingly, without a note of triumph, "I tink it very good trick *sahib*." The crows watched him. Then he clapped his hands. There was a sound of rushing wings and countless black dots seemed to be hurrying away.

It was worth three rupees no doubt about it, and the amazed *sahib* made it five. The conjuror salaamed low, and a whistle on the line showed the train coming in. As it moved out the *sahib* saw the conjuror had resumed his cloak and was sitting by his bundle on the platform again.

That is the story, and it has greatly puzzled those who know of it. I once asked a *sannyassi* of my acquaintance about it, and he was not a bit surprised, but remarked that it ought not to have been done by a *tamasha-wallah*, who used his powers for pelf.

#### SNAKE CHARMERS

The folk who are to be seen at all fairs and who wander around the countryside with every sort of performing animal, have the weirdest origin, dragged up on the fringes of the outcaste world and the criminal tribes. Among them is a strange example of even the humblest having someone humbler still or someone on their backs to bite them. The outcaste criminal race of *Mangs* referred to elsewhere, have more or less attached to them, but whose touch is pollution even to them, folk known as the *Dakkalgars* (perhaps from the *dakkari*, which is a musical instrument) who go about with a pack of dogs, and a stringed instrument known as *kinnari*, which has a wooden peacock on its handle. They cut the ears of a dog and a bitch and dress them as man and woman. The *Mangs* from time immemorial are charged with the maintenance of the *Dakkalgars*, and if this is refused the *Dakkalgar* will ex-communicate

them. Thus : the dog and bitch man and woman are produced outside the hutch of the refusers, named after the man and his wife, and the *Dakkalgar* walks backward called them to him by the names. The headman of the local *Mangs* is then obliged to enforce the ban. The *Mangs* themselves produce many conjurors, and sorcerers, known as *Mang Garudis* (*Garudi* meaning snake charmer and also sorcerer). This epithet of sorcerer refers primarily to conjuring, but also to magic and spells.

#### PIPE AND TABOR

The itinerant musician has been referred to incidentally in many connections and how as a rule, he comes from the humblest of the depressed classes, not far removed from the scavengers and suchlike. His name and form is legion throughout the length and breadth of the land, and he performs on the *dole* or drum, the *beyla*, various forms of pipe and flageolet, and also on many instruments of the string variety played with a bow or the fingers, such as the *saringhi*. These are many in shape from the beautifully shaped half-gourds to a few strings stretched across a cheroot box from which equally plaintive music seems to come. For many years after the storming of Dargai by the Gordon Highlanders, mendicants, sometimes blind, would play what they called "*Carkee Narth*"—"Cock of the North"—at the changing places on the line to the Murree Hills, and no doubt do so still wherever motorists tarry a moment. "Cock of the North" was the air to which the Gordons rushed the fatal neck below the Dargai Ridge, on the 20th of October, 1897, and which the wounded Piper Findlater, to the delight of the British Press and public, blew as he lay shot through the leg. Centuries hence it will no doubt continue. The musician *mirasi*, *bajawallah*,

MUSICIANS AND VAGABONDS



The snake charmer piping on his gourd-flageolet



The frontier Mirasi playing "Carkee Nartli"  
(Cock of the North) on his saringha





whatever his myriad names, is in great request at marriages, betrothals and any domestic occurrence or religious test. In fact "that infernal tom-toming" is to be heard in all directions in the bazaars after dusk. Those who have regimental bazaars attached to their barracks will remember the petition from regimental followers for permission to play "soft country music" till the small hours.

Tom-toms big and small are often a worry to the western ears, but even the cultivated East seems to like it, and on many occasions the "little drum" is played with a haunting sound that makes some of the amorous music deadly so. Many there be among the soldiery who have heard it heartening the tribesmen on the opposite row of hills, or what is really serious, egging on the swordsmen to rush a rear-guard that may be in trouble. Then it is a fierce exultant batter on the sheep skins that sets the swordsmen to his feet and the rear-guardsmen to close his grip on his rifle. The pipe and the gourd-flageolet have alluring notes, weird at times by reason of the half-tones, which even if strange to European ears have a charm entirely their own. Musicians and dancing girls naturally go together, but those who play and dance at the village fairs are different from those who haunt the courtyards of the wealthy townsmen. Both are adepts at the tummy-shimmy whether the lady be in cottons and her anklets tin, or in the silks and gold of more aristocratic circles, the villages fairs or the merchants' courtyards.

As examples of the musician's humbleness—and with the humbleness of the outcastes will often go vagabondage—the *Ghasis* may be cited as a numerous tribe and in Bengal and Orissa an aboriginal lot, analogous to *Chandal* and *Pariah*. To a fishing or labouring income they add some increment by beating drums and kettle-drums and braying vast copper horns to everyone's

enjoyment on all sorts of occasions, and no chief or noble of quality would move without the raucous announcement. The *Ghasi* women act as midwives, sell quack medicines, and are generally of similar vagabondish habits. *Gayans* are singers from Bengal who are a branch of the widespread low caste *Bediya* clans. They are Moslem and seclude their women, which in reality is sheer "swank" and in public they sing Bengali songs as a profession or a subsidiary profession. The *Kans* allied to the outcaste *Dom*, are also musicians, but earn a secondary living as umbrella repairers. In the West of India the *Gondalis* are religious minstrels and are recruited from many castes, usually from children offered to gods in fulfilment of vows. They own a Hindu allegiance and Bhowani, as a form of Kali Ma, is there special object of reverence. They wear necklaces of the particular shell known as Bhowani cowries.

In the West also is a peculiar coterie of musicians the *Kalavants*, who dance, sing and whose women are courtesans. They claim to be the descendants or the *apsaras* (heavenly singers) and *ghandarvas* (heavenly dancers) of Hindu mythology. Their instruments are the *mridanga*, a kind of drum the *tal* or timbrel, and the *saringha* or fiddle. As all the good looking women become professional courtesans, and are in request in better class circles as mistresses and kept women, the male of the coterie, have to look for and marry outcaste girls. The female children are always courtesans and the males singers (*gans*). They go about in parties of three to four *gans*, and one to four *Kalavants*. They have a recognized status of importance in that the classes that are only courtesan in the West, such as *Devlis Pandis Adbalkis*, etc., do not venture to dance unless holding a *perwana* or license from the *Kalavants*.

Throughout India the classes of musicians and their

habits are innumerable and only a few are enumerated. One and all with perhaps an exception when we get near the *Bhats* or bards of Rajputana, are on the disreputable verge and their connection with the courtesans is the closest. Despite this disreputable life and origins, they are truly musical in many of their conceptions.

#### VAGRANT MEDICINE

There have been and are many schools of Eastern medicine, which with many truths, some ancient and valuable knowledge of drugs, combine so much pedantry and muddled medieval philosophy that they never advance. Eastern medicine gains power from some of the subsidiary sciences, from hypnotic suggestion from breathing and other regimes, from auto-suggestion and the like. It has not been at work for hundreds of years without acquiring knowledge both of the human frame and the human mind. In outline it works something as the doctors of the West in the middle ages and it owes something to Hippocrates and the learning of ancient Greek, unless, as some say, Greece owes its knowledge to India. The *Ayur Veda* the ancient Indian laws and treatise of medicine, is said to have come from Brahma himself, and the ancient writings of Susruta and Charaka abound in details which are evidence of a considerable ancient medical knowledge. Hindu medicine is based on the philosophy that divides human life into the combination of soul, mind and the five senses, and the three qualities of goodness, passion and meekness. The vital principle is located in the vicinity of the chest where dwells the vital fluid, drawn of all the parts and principles aforesaid. The vital parts of the body were classed as one hundred and seven. Life, that is to say the medical life of man, is divided into twelve stages each having its own peculiar characteristics, until

that stage of decrepitude is reached where like an old house, the body needs many props. Death may come in one hundred and one ways, of which only one is natural.

Hindu medical theory ascribes sickness to three main causes, first to sin in a former existence, and in this list they are wise enough to place all those ailments which defy their skill, to derangement of the humours or peculiarities of the phases, and lastly to a combination of the two which is incurable. Their drugs and remedies are numerous and undoubtedly some are of great value. Mercury, gold, zinc, iron and arsenic, are used to a degree that is surprising. The rules of drug-taking are tedious and absurd, their measure of time commences with fifteen winks of the eye. In fact all their wisdom and experiences of countless years is much spoilt with puerility, but undoubtedly some of the secrets of very modern times have been theirs for ages. Some of the modern Hindu doctors and students have tried to modernize and purify some of their systems to keep pace with modern medicine, while in science and research Indians are a valuable addition to the world's workers.

But this is not the place to speak at length of Indian medicine, its good and its bad points, its homeopathy and its allopathy, but rather to glance at what is much more popular to the people, the vagrant quacks and necromancers in medicine. Such wander through the villages with pipe and drum to cure all those who will, like to him in the old English country song which runs :

"I'm a jolly old Quack, Quack Quack,  
What carries his pack on his back,  
I've rhubarb and pills and blisters and squills  
And they call me 'Medicine Jack'."

In any case since the ancient medicoes of learning

do not bother their heads with the outcaste and the simpler peasantry, all such have been at the mercy of all the impostors, quacks and merry andrews who choose to make a living out of their necessity. The vagrant vendors of cures have done the job for so many centuries that they have acquired a status which at any rate, ensures them a living. For several generations Government dispensaries, civil surgeons, and their assistants have endeavoured to reach the people in some way or other, while the modern ways of the motor have made travelling dispensaries useful enough but dull. Perhaps in this connection the selling of packets of quinine at the post offices for a farthing, and the travelling of the vaccinator have been the most popular. Smallpox, the special attribute of one of the forms of dread Kali herself, known as *Mata-devi* the "smallpox goddess", is at all times and in all parts, most properly worshipped, dreaded, glorified and propitiated, but the vaccinator is also accepted, lest the goddess be not listening or be in pernicketty and malevolent mood.

It is not perhaps to be wondered at that the people, especially the poor and oppressed, love their vagrant medicines. If our doctors and their assistants would beat a drum, put the drug in a piece of gold leaf, tie a monkey's skull round their neck, and generally make the show more interesting than a kindly "next please", they would be still more popular. It is also to be remembered that the high caste Hindu doctor trained in western medicine and surgery is not very ready to doctor the unclean. As already stated, he would not think of conducting a post mortem involving the knife on such, but would stand by at a purity distance and direct a sweeper to cut the body. Perhaps the nice kind folk who want to see the poor of India in their hands, will realize why sixty million folk dance and shout for King George and his administration.

Let us follow one of the vagrant tribes who deal in cures, this time in Western India. There, among others a tribe of people known as the *Vaidus* who indeed recruit from all and sundry of the criminal tribes with an inclination their way. They wander over the country of the Deccan and the Konkan, the upland plains and the coastal fields, professing to cure anything from coughs to consumption. They perambulate fairs and villages making their call which varies.

*Nadi-Perakshi Vaid*, "Here we are! pulse-feeling doctor men."

*Mandur Vaid*, "Here we are! Medicine selling."

*Garam-Vaid*, "Heat-healing doctor men," which is generally venereal disease, *Voila Okhad* "Wind Curers." *Sardila Okhad*, "Cold Curers." They also bleed by cupping and with leeches. Here is a party entering a village, two medicine men and two attendants. Carried on the shoulders of the latter on a pole is an ochre bag of coarse cotton or canvas. It is their medicine and charm bag and all the hocus-pocus of Harley Street as they understand it. Balls of dried cow-dung, lizards and snake skins, porcupine quills, tiger's claws, the hair and teeth of bears, foxes heads, monkeys skulls, dried umbilical cords, all and anything likely to attract interest and breed confidence in semi-occult powers.

The binding of amulets is practised by many both doctors and religious competitors. The charms of the Persian writing *Khandkars* have been told of. The writing of prescriptions in ink, or rather *mantras* and extracts from the Qoran, on the stiff glazed native-made paper with Indian ink washed off in water and the water drunk, has been referred to. The water in which a Brahmin's toe has been washed has astounding virtues, while it is said that the Agha Khan's bath water is sold all over the world as a tonic and suggestion healer among the faithful of the Ismaili sect.

It is also to be remembered that the moon and all the planets come into both cures and good fortunes, and the roving astrologer competes to some extent, with the more genuine and definite medicine man.

It will be of interest to watch the village crowd gather round the *Nadi-parkshi-void*, "the pulse feeling doctor". As in the West the feeling of the pulse is an important matter that gives confidence be it never so unnecessary. The *void* will squat and smoke, and an old lady will draw near, and behind her a woman with an infant straddled across her hip an infant that has eyes that attracts countless flies. The *void* will not suggest cleanliness, that would be an unknown condition to him, but he writes an amulet charm and tells the woman to wait while it dries and works. An old man has a strange pain to describe and the doctor looks wise, and consults the monkey skull which is round his neck. He asks a question as to which of the two diseases the patient has. In the meantime there is a commotion, for the child has eaten the charm which was to have been tied to his arm. The doctor wants half his original fee for repeating it, and this the woman refuses. Thanks to the generosity of the beholders who are now gathering round, two pice more are paid and a fresh charm written. And so it goes on all harmless enough as a rule.

Among the village cures whether used by the vagrant medicine-folk, or by village wise women, are several that are strange. Lumbago and rheumatism are cured by the touch of the feet of a person that was born feet first, though how this knowledge is preserved is not on record. Hares' blood is a fruitful cure for many troubles. The hare is rather a special animal because the female menstruates every month like a woman. For this reason many Moslems in certain districts, the Pathan especially, will not eat its flesh.



Fevers have castes and before a wise-woman or a village doctor will treat one it is necessary to find out the caste, but how this is done is not clear. It is really quite a scientific point; for it really but emphasizes the fact that fever is a symptom and not a disease and expresses the fact in this strange way. The various fevers that are due to malaria are recognized as they were in ancient Rome. Was it not Horace who said or sang "Oh that I could change my tertian ague for a quartern" and thus get one more days' freedom from the recurrence? A good cure for a tertian fever in the Punjab is to pretend to bury your village headmen. If you have only one then the headman of two or three neighbouring villages will do. The graves may be small but they should be smoothed and neat and no one should see you make them. Perhaps this in some subconscious way recognizes the fact that if the village headman would fill in the slimy borrowpits round the village that harbour mosquitoes, there would be no tertian fever.

Northern India has quite a good idea about curing sore throats. You get a person whose right little finger and forefinger will meet over the backs of the two intermediate fingers to rub your throat with them in that position.

Hiccoughing is attributed to recollection of you on the part of some relative and friend. To cure it, it is only necessary to repeat the names of all your friends till you come to the right one.

Witchcraft is, of course, responsible for sickness. In the Punjab, children especially, suffer from *saya* or *masan*, wasting sickness. Women take up the earth from a *masan* or burning ground and caste it over an enemy's child, which then wastes away.

To ascertain if a child is suffering from *masan*, take a new earthenware pot and fill it with the water from

seven wells, bury it under your threshold, and dig it up after seven days. If the water has dried up your child is suffering from *masan*. All of which gives some idea of how complicated and hard to live is the peasants life.

Dried tigers' flesh is a most potent medicine not only as a love stimulant, but as a general tonic and pick-me-up, and in northern India is carried and kept handy by many. How you tell when tigers' flesh, which is of course dried, is genuine, is one of life's problems. The vendor usually produces a tigers claw as proof of the authenticity and that seems to satisfy the more gullible.

Tigers' flesh is especially valued in the Punjab in times of smallpox and a Hindu's house who is known to have some is besieged by those who would obtain a portion.

In Eastern Bengal the female quack is also the tattooer, and is known as the *Godna-wali*. *Bediya* women travel about the country with a bag containing a variety of drugs, a cupping horn (*Singa*) and a scarifier (*haran*). Their cry differs little from that of the Vaidus of the West and this is how it runs : "To tattoo, to cup, and to extract worms from decayed teeth." In the matter of the worms they are said to keep maggots in a bamboo tube and show one to the patient as having been extracted. They are also caterers for woman's disorders and the love philtre of weird components is within their knowledge. They recite *mantras* to alleviate pain and keep off the inflammation their mistreatment is likely to engender. Among respectable families, an old nurse tattoos the girls. These marks used to be peculiar to Hindus but were copied by Moslem women, though the custom is dying out in educated circles.

#### LOVE PHILTRES AND APHRODISIACS

Apart from medicine and sickness there is among the men of the East a constant dread of impotence, and

substance or food that may induce it. The lesser press of India make all they take by advertising marvellous aphrodisiacs in no unmeasured terms. The early eroticism of the East, means early difficulties. The student finds matriculations and degrees and an ardent girl-bride contradictory and flies to the love-philtre. That is why cocaine, the most powerful of them all, is so much smuggled to the East as already related. But the fear of impotence seizes the virile as well as luxurious intelligentsia. All along the Indus Valley the red and white rock salt from the great salt hill at Kalabagh has this sinister reputation, and only the black salt from Kohat is thought really well of. The Indian soldier is specially suspicious of lime juice given him on active service as an anti-scorbutic and will pour it away if not compelled to drink it in front of an officer, for its reputation is equally sinister in this respect. This dread is of course a god-send to all travelling quacks and vagrant medicos as it was in the West in days gone by, and indeed is still, in the depths of the country. It is, of course, a fruitful source of fun for witches who can easily place inhibitions on the male. The flesh of an owl is a specially potent love potion, and inspires a violent affection for the giver.

But it is to be noticed that the love philtres are more for the aphrodisiacal use of the individual, than to inspire affection in the breast of another, as in the West. There the gardener will try and give his young lady Lubelia tea to win her regard, or perhaps try and wipe her face with his handkerchief that he has kept in his own armpit! This is said to be infallible in Sussex and even Kent, but of no use in the Danelagh where they are harder stuff!

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BOMB PARASTS. A STORY OF PROGRESS

THE LAARENCE GARDENS—OLD FRIENDS IN  
LAHORE—THE BRIGHT STAR OF THE PUNJAB—  
BAMBOO BAKHSHISH

AMONG the mysteries of India to-day is the underground murder cult referred to in progress among students, which in Bengal has penetrated to depths that are extremely hard to reach, and which have already resulted in the murder of several valuable officers, both British and Indian. How impossible it is to avoid will have been brought home to this orderly country by the pathetic letter of Mr. Holmes, the magistrate, written to friends pointing out the inevitability of his own end. It will be remembered that a few months ago Mr. Holmes the kindly magistrate of a district was murdered by two little Bengali girl students to whose pretence of a petition he had been listening in a good-natured manner.

Some of these murder cults are organized on the basis of a strange *mélange* of masonic ritual and a festival of horrible furious Kali, in her wilder aspects. The following story will show some of the horror of many of the older loyal and faithful Indians at what is going on, and how some of the murder gangs are worked. The story has been veiled as to names and place, and located in Lahore, because Lahore is the centre of all that is both good and evil, and there the true colour of the mighty Punjab where men both white and brown are men, can best be shown. The magic of *Jan Laarence*, still works some of its cures.

## THE LAARENCE GARDENS

The Mall at Lahore in the long months of the Punjab winter is as an attractive a spot as any one could wish to see. As a capital city of the most virile province of India it is well that it should be so. The colleges, the law-courts, the public offices have been built with great attention to the continuity and suitability of design, and this mall is a mingling of Eastern Art with inconspicuous Western efficiency that is typical of India at its best.

The Mall and roads are well avenued, *Ficus religiosa* which men call the *Banyan*, mulberry and that great tree of the Punjab *Dalbergia sissu* or the *Shisham*, edge its ways, the public gardens are full of the many *eucalpyti* and all the flowering shrubs that Eastern gardens cherish, and under them the students of the universities sit and study. Unfortunately their study is not always of the best, for if you peer over their shoulders you may find some cheap translation of French eroticism in their hands or the latest effusion from Moscow, the which is a pity and also a scandal.

The most beautiful time of all in this city of palaces is when spring is about to become summer, when the *shisham* is at its greenest, when the roses are legion and the droning of the Persian wheels bringing the water sleepily from well to garden, sets the world a-drowse, for "lazily drowsily, drowsily lazily" is that melodious song of the wheels.

Among the trees on the Mall stands the statute of old John Lawrence, in hot weather comfy attire, breeches and boots and open shirt. In one hand is a sword in the other a great quill pen. The subaltern's version is "*How can I sharpen this pen with this sword?*" The real question kindly and harmless, is to the people of the Punjab. "Shall we rule between us by the ways

of peace or the ways of War?" And all went well for half a century and more, and the old folk came in to gaze with affection on "*Jan Laarence*," who was so kindly and withal so firm. Then some thrice-distilled ass whose self-induced inferiority-complex got the better of him, discovered that it meant a slur on the people of India. Had he his deserts he would still not be able to sit down, but now and again Chota Lall or some such goose, moves that the statue be removed. Then perhaps a half-anna subscription provides a pot of tar and someone's pillow is stolen and Jan Laarence whose real statue lies in Punjab prosperity, appears in a guise of feathers, which no doubt, does not worry his shade.

There is a story in the Punjab told in clubs and places where they gossip, a story which is not original for it is told of a greater man in Egypt. But this is how it runs to the delight of wild asses and men who should know better.

They tell how a certain Governor-General whose name is best told in asterisks, for the story can be told of more than one, woke up while visiting in Government House at Lahore, to find a shade standing by his bedside gazing sadly at him.

"Who are you?" demanded the Governor-General.

"I am John Lawrence, originally of the Punjab. Who are you?"

"I am . . . . Viceroy of India."

"Ah!" said the shade musingly, Ah! . . . . I remember. The man who saved himself and lost India."

That is not a nice story, but when your most staunch friend, a police officer, has just been murdered to make a students' holiday, when a young Sikh soldier has been so worked up that he must slay an English lady in her garden and chase with a sword her scream-

ing children amid the hollyhocks and lupins, strong men are not always just. Also it is damned annoying to have to play tennis in the Lahore gardens with a revolver on, while students sit round with their indecent novels, and where the peace of eighty years seems to have gone west.

However, that is all silly talk, for Lahore is still Lahore, and Mian Mir is still a stout centre of sturdy Indian troops and Atkinses, the latter better than ever he was, and the good guns in the gun-park on the plain of the Saint Mian Mir, where Sir Charles Napier of pious memory showed his engineer how to find a site for a cantonment . . . found it by the simple expedient as the stone records, of sticking his orderly's lance in the ground, and saying, "This shall be church and centre."

No ! Lahore still goes on, in those gardens which bear the name of Lawrence, where :

"Lightly the demoiselles tittered and leapt  
Merrily capered the players all."

" . . . a Mussalman civil and mild.  
Watched as the shuttlecocks rose and fell  
And he said as he counted his beads and smiled  
God smite their souls to the nethermost hell."

But the folk who use the gardens most are the Indian folk, to whom the police band is the last word in music, and as it gets dusk, "Old G" in his high three decker old-world "fitton" crawls round the drive in phantom, with perhaps too, dear dead and gone Frank Stevenson, who saw the trouble coming. That is Lahore in the evenings as we love to remember it, and see as it still does, the Governor's carriage with its four-in-hand of camels come back from the races, and all the while so moves the world a-pace, young Indian girls dance "the Blues" at Stiffles and police

search the bushes for students with revolvers who want heaven and *Isvara* by way of the gallows. The which my Lords and gentlemen is a mystery . . .

## OLD FRIENDS IN LAHORE

“Down the Mall so hot and dusty  
I could see a great *Kiswasti*  
In the distance I could see  
His consort *Hamare wasti bhi*.”

So runs the nonsense rhyme of the mess-house and *kiswasti*, which only means “why on earth”, is on the lips of many simple folks these days including those of *Rissaldar-major* and honorary “*kaptan*” Ganesha Singh, late of Simpson’s Doaba Horse. Ganesha Singh had been driven in from the wheat colony by his friend the assistant commissioner, and was now coming down the Mall, flip-flop with his great Punjab countryman’s shoes on. Incidentally he had a red-leather pair embroidered with gold, that his young wife Tita-bhai had given him in his pocket, for he had come on a two-fold mission. He was going to call on the magistrate of Lahore, a friend of long standing, with whom he had become friends in the early days of the World War when men that were men came together.

The manner of it has a charm of its own. Ganesha Singh had even in the remote years before the War joined the pension list, the *pasmanda*, the list of those “with tired feet” as the expressive Persian has it. But when the Punjab Government called for pensioned Indian officers to officer Labour Corps and the like, Ganesha Singh, burly and white-bearded, turned up to the English *sahib’s* office.

“Hullo, old soldier,” said the *sahib*, seeing Ganesha Singh’s snow-white beard. “How long have you been eating *pinson*.”

“Eleven years, *sahib*,” replied a very deep voice,



"but when my father heard about the War, he said, 'Get out, I won't have any of you young fellows loafing about the farm. Get out and go to the wars !' So here I am *sahib*. Ho ! Ho ! Ho !"

"How old is your father then ?"

"I don't know *sahib*, but he was a *ressal<sup>1</sup>dar* when he went to the Ballie Guard" (Baillie Guard is the name for the Residency at Lucknow, to the relief of which many Punjab soldiers went).

So the two had long been fast friends, and he would go to the *sahib's* bungalow and not to his *duftar*<sup>2</sup>, and there was no *chaprassi*<sup>3</sup> so impudent as dare ask for a fee to admit him. But he had not brought his red-shoes for the *Dipty Sahib*, he knew what solid Punjabi shoes were for, to walk on and no nonsense, but he was also going to see his son a student in the Lahore University. Well young men nowadays were particular, and his son would expect him to look his best among student friends. La La ! Tita-Bhai knew that and it was she who had insisted on the red shoes.

Down the Mall too, had jingled half a dozen *Akalis*, great grey grim Sikh fanatics, whom the police keep an eye on, old soldiers most of them, dressed in deep blue with their five *kakas*, quoit, and *kirpan* and everything else very much *en evidence*. Not that they worried Ganesha Singh for there among them was his old trooper friend, once the drill *duffedar* in his regiment. "Aha ! *Gurdit Singh, Sri Khalsa ji ki jai*,"<sup>4</sup> and the *Akalis* clanged an answer. Then Gurdit Singh dropped behind. "Aha ! old friend, where's that son of yours ?"

"He is at ischool," said the old man proudly. "Firsht istandard pass now at *kalij*."

"Ah !" said the *Akali*, "I misdoubt he needs some

<sup>1</sup> A Captain of Horse.

<sup>2</sup> Office.

<sup>3</sup> Doorkeeper or messenger.

<sup>4</sup> "Victory to the Holy Elect".

bamboo *bakhshish*<sup>1</sup>. See you do it, and don't say I did not warn you ; so long !" and off he jogged, while his friend stood listening to the long drawn Punjabi the *aunda* and *jalla*, that lingers on the tongue, and takes longer to say than to write its English equivalent.

"Aha ! bamboo *bakhshish*, that was a good one. They all wanted the stick, the best *bakhshish* perhaps they could have." "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Then the old man started. Did he mean the boy was in mischief ? He hurried on the Dipty's house now close by.

The wheel was still droning as the patient bullock went round and round, and there was a click of croquet balls on the pleasant green lawn. There were two *mem-sahibs* and another *sahib* too. Perhaps he had better wait. Your true Indian gentleman is diffident of butting in. But Grayson the Magistrate *Sahib* saw the old man, and came across smiling with hand extended, and then you might see that very pretty sight, a true Punjab greeting, breast to breast, with hand over back, for all the world like the Five Points of Fellowship, if you know what that means, there on the Englishman's lawn.

"Welcome Ganesha Singh, and you are here in the nick of time for I have something to say to you, and here staying the night with me is my brother-in-law, Earnleigh *Sahib*, also a cavalry soldier. Here, Alec, may I introduce Captain Ganesha Singh, formerly of the Doaba Horse. The officer came over. "Why, of course I know of Ganesha Singh, his brother was my *ressaldar* when I joined *Salaam Sahib, Ram Ram.*"

And the old man's face lit up, and out of his waistcoat, his embroidered waistcoat came a little packet of cardamom seeds, the bond of peace and badge of friendship all India over. "But first of all you must

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<sup>1</sup> *Bakhshish*—gift, gratuity, tip.

have some tea and a tot of whisky for the good of the Khalsa, while I and the *sahib* have our dinner. Come into my study."

In the study the three sat down.

"I am glad you are here Alec, it is a bit of luck getting you and the old man together. We are raiding a poisonous rag here that is spreading sedition and the bomb-cult, *Kali* and all the murder ritual, something like the old Thuggee business. Several boys from the university have been got hold of. I think the old man's son is in it. We may even get him there to-night for they hold their meetings in the editor's office. Now that the old man is here I would perhaps hand his son over to him, and keep him out of arrest. It would break the old man's heart. Also there is another young Muhammedan I want to save who is in it. He is the son of old Mehtab Khan Gukkar of the 4th Punjab Cavalry who was honorary magistrate in my last division. They ought to be in your ranks and not getting mixed up with this poisonous tomfoolery. Mind you there is something in it. This all fired folly of Government in allowing this quite unnecessary poison to spread beats me. Pah! Because you can let hot air float about Trafalgar Square or on Tower Hill you can't do it here or on the Maidan at Calcutta. They've managed to send these boys wild. Then there is the curse of *Kali* the mother of destruction, that gets into their hysterical overwrought minds. If I can get hold of these two boys can you do anything?"

"Hum! Got quite enough to do to keep the poison out of the regiment. Some devils in the villages are trying to bully their women. We watch 'em all day, like a mother and toddlers. Perhaps the C.O. would take them for a bit, if they are any sort of good, for their father's sake."

"If you like to take the old man and go with Allanson

the police officer on special service, you may see the excitement. It may fizzle out or you may find a bombing party eating ice-cream."

If you turn out of the Mall as you get towards Anarkalli, and take the road to that very Sultan Serai, where MacIntosh Jallaluddeen lay dying, the unwritten history of Mother Maturin who kept the seaman's haunt at Saigon among his papers, or where Peachy Carneghan and Michael Dravot started for Kafiristan, you will get into some very narrow quarters. Half-way up to the Serai there is a tank, a somewhat fetid tank and a now forgotten Moslem tomb, and beside a close bazaar with those carved wood upper balconies, so often connected in the East with the courtesans and their lairs. In the middle of them a narrow passage turns to the left and inside is a hive of more or less disreputable folk, dancers and musicians, some Afghan horse copers, and the makers of zithars. Up a three pair back lie the editorial office and press of the *Bright Star of the Punjab*, a very disreputable paper which has used the name of a long extinct order founded by Runjhith Singh. The *Bright Star* circulates among a few hundred students in Lahore, Amritsar and Ferozepore, and has not the ghost of a chance of paying its way save for its advertisements. Those advertisements are of the only kind that pay in India, and one in which even more reputable rags deal, that is to say, love philtres and aphrodisiacs, for old men and young. In this case the appeal is to the students, whom the decadent ways of the Hindu East may put in need of such.

In the midst of long columns of advertisements, one specially powerful for "Indian chieftains", stood the turgid incendiary leading articles, prating of the British sucking their life-blood, of trade ruined, of all agriculture smashed, of daily smothering of "aspirations of powerful omniscient determinative full of high-

cock-a-lorum Indian youth" . . . "who can withstand us when we call 'Hail motherland' and say good morning mister, to these haughty magistrates." We may laugh, but it is all very dangerous stuff especially for young men of the debating societies drunk as the great Disraeli once said : "With the exuberance of their own verbosity." Here is an appeal to that strange lust of blood that lies somewhere at the back of all human nature but which in India is especially *en evidence*, which added to the doctrine of "*karma*" is responsible for most evil, for the cruel irresponsible principle and practice of child marriage, for the burning of widows and the unabashed worship of the "organs of birth and the circlet of bones, and the loose loves carved on the temple stones".

Siva, the Destroyer, the popular God Mahadeo, has a *sakhti*, a female force, that folk call his wife, the Bhowani or Kali whose attributes and clawfuls of dead have been described already. In visions she comes urging men to murder "*Main bookhi hun ! Main bookhi hun !*" "I am hungry! Blood! Blood! Blood" and the student seizes his knife to fall on his school inspector and the young sepoy goes *fantee* and hurls himself on his officer's wife and children, flashing sword in his recruit hand. "*Main bookhi hun !*"

Listen to this. "Arise young men, slay and spare not, wipe them out root and branch. Slay them who spared not your women whom they raped and slew at Amritsar, spare not the children! Would you slay a snake and leave the eggs!" and such-like and so forth. And the anæmic looking prematurely-wifed student, who was assistant editor and smiled with pride at his work and cuffed the small boy who was compositor and shouted "*kapy chahiye*" before he was ready with it.

"Pull Viceroy from his high horse, learn to make bombs with mother's milk. Oh, my lord, how truly

magnificent ! *Kali Ma ki jai*. "Victory to Mother Kali, who is queen of death traps." And it is to be observed that our composer of leading articles, had now abandoned the words of a European anarchist and was using his own bright phrasing.

And as we watch him sweating to make his mark among his readers, we shall see that folk are gathering. The editor of the *Bright Star* himself came in. Not much older than the student, pathetically sallow, with fierce thin austere lips, a man who had failed to get his B.A. degree, largely because he was living with a wife when he should have been in the playing fields . . . he stood a failure as regards his great career in a Government office. Sour, sour with disappointment, sour for a hundred trivial causes that no young man should have. Half a dozen young men also were in their way, on the stairs or in the courtyard, and there was something to be said for the good side of that. It was not a reputable spot or suitable for students to loiter in. There was a zithar twanging and a drum, a little erotic drum throbbing in the Begum Allah Visaya's quarters with the latticed balcony and a clink of castanets, and one or two of the students heard the call. If we steal up the narrow stairs in her house while the lads are gathering in the editor of the *Bright Star's* room, we shall see the Begum herself sitting with half a dozen girls around her much as those of Hamesha Behar.

For twenty years and more now had the Begum presided in that latticed salon, and heard all the gossip of nations pass before her. She had also realized that too much ghee was the devil for dancing-girls and had kept her youth and figure. Sitting there in a rich embroidered crimson velvet waistcoat and green velvet trousers of saucy cut, she looked what she was—a queen of entertainers. Men came to her house for many reasons, for gossip society and repartee, as well as to

consort with her dancers. Her girls filled *hugas* to perfection, and the rosewater in the *huga* bowls was the best in the market. The girls, too, were an attractive lot. Two sonsy Punjab widows who were not going to shave their heads and slave for their mothers-in-law, to please anyone, let alone burn on any pyre, three little outcaste gipsy gamins with breasts like towers in the little green camisoles embroidered with dragons wings, aye and a daughter of her own as fugele woman . . . a well run troupe that would defy competition. Also and it was a very important point, the Begum was on very good terms with the police, so much so that now and again young Allanson, the assistant-superintendent of police, a darkish lad who could talk Punjabi like a *Gujar*, would sit in her dark corner, in the guise of a long haired sulky Baluch and listen. Incidentally at that moment, half a dozen police disguised as Afghan horse thieves were sitting on the embroidered cushions in the dark retiring rooms, from one of which a hole behind a picture actually gave peep-way into the editor's room next door.

Thus as Din Dyal "failed" B.A., assembled his following, all the while Allanson or one of his men were watching under cover of the picture, and to him had now come Earnleigh and with him Ganesha Singh, by way of a back door of the Begum's, and all the while the zithar was twanging and the little drum luring, and shuffling feet kept the visitors amused.

And as they peeped in turn this is what they saw and heard, the *bomb parast's* ritual. The editor's table was pushed back against the window which was heavily curtained, and behind in a niche in the wall, was a glaring oleograph of Kali, jewels and necklaces stamped out in tinsel, and Kali Ma with teeth gnashing and hands full of writhing human forms. Three little lamps flickered in front, and between them stood two of



BAGGAGES COMING TO TOWN  
Dancing girls driving to Delhi

*To face page 250]*





Mills hand grenades. In front knelt one of the students, the son, if you please, of *ex-Resaldar* of His Majesty's Doaba Horse, and Honorary Captain, Ganesha Singh. As the boy crouched with his hands out palms upwards, a low chant rose. *Kalima-Kalima ! Sri Sri Kali Ma !*

Then the voice of Din Dyal. "Repeating that oath after me" :

"I, Basant Singh, hereby and hereon, do solemnly swear that I will use bomb (put initiates hand on bombs) whenever this lodge shall so *order*, under no less a penalty of having tongue *tarn* from throat, and wizand slit, if I fail to obey arder, so help me *Kali Ma.*" And after him the lad Basant Singh, repeated the rigmarole, and as he finished once again the chant :

*"Jai Jai Kali Ma, Jai Jai Kali Ma ki."*

Then all present bowed and laid their foreheads on the floor, and Dyal Chand threw some powder and the *chirags* flared blue and died away.

"Well I'm damned," said Grayson, "of all the impudent blighters, let Ganesha Singh look."

Ganesha Singh looked, and once again Basant Singh put his hands on the bombs, and the chant rose :

*"Jai Jai Kali Ma."*

"We've got the lot anyway," said Allanson, "I've the whole place surrounded and they can't get away. Dyal Chand will have a repeating pistol and there is in old Bengali who has the same. I shall break the door in, Grayson, with four of my men, and the Inspector and I will cover those two with our pistols and take our chance of the others. Shall we start now?"

Earnleigh nodded, and patted Ganesha Singh's shoulder. "You see old soldier." But the old man could only mutter through his set teeth "*B...nch...te !*"

A few minutes more, and the police officer and his

men broke in. It was all quiet enough. The levelled pistols prevented any attempt of the *bomb parasts* to use their fire-arms, even had they the nerve. Dyal Chand and the Bengali were handcuffed and the none by one the remainder, as their names were taken. Besides Ganesha Singh was the young Moslem who was a son of Mehtab Khan.

"Those two," said the police officer, "will come to my house in a police car with Inspector Nurdin and two constables, the remainder to the lock-up."

And in the ancient Hindu metaphor "that was that". It was all done so quickly that in the lattices above, the zithar twanged away and someone was singing and the song of the *Girafra Badshah*, the Captive King, that moves to love and tears and at times is distinctly "*Na Manasib*". The scent of musk and attar was wafted down into the court when the champing of the green wheat by the dairy-man's buffaloes, chorused with the notes of the song—as the puff-bellied hot weather moon arose.

#### BAMBOO BAKHSHISH

It had not taken long to dish the *Bright Star*, now safely under lock and key, and the police officer drove back to his bungalow, with the *ressaldar-major*, the young men and the police in a Ford behind.

"I think we had better leave them till the morning, Ganesha Singh, they can be handcuffed for to-night in the garage, the car can stay outside, and we will talk about them."

"They will be all right with me *sahib*, if the *huzur* will let me have them. The Inspector says that Mehtab Khan's boy is his sister's husband's nephew. We want to talk to them."

"Very well old soldier. You arrange."

And as they got to the house he called to the Inspector.

"Can you and the *Ressaldar* manage these lads till the morning."

"*Bila shak Huzur*", "Without doubt," replied the Inspector, "we shall hold them all right and your honours *chaprassi* will give me a blanket for them and for myself."

It was hardly ten o'clock when having seen to the old man's comfort, ordering a couple of native beds on to the lawn in front of the garage, that Grayson got to the porch in front of his house to find another car there.

As he went up the steps on to the veranda his wife called :

"Here is Colonel Conachie of the Doaba Horse come to see us, they are in camp by the fort and have been dining in cantonments. Butler! Bring some whisky-and-soda and ice."

Colonel Conachie and his adjutant both in their mess kit stood up.

"By Jove, Conachie, that is curious, what are you doing here?"

"We're marching down from Jhelum to Jullundhur and were kept a bit late owing to that frontier trouble, thought we might look you and your wife up, even at this late hour. We are off early and we got away from the cavalry mess at Mian Mir fairly quickly."

"Well any way, we are delighted to see you late or early old chap, have a drink and a cheroot and I'll tell you what we've been doing."

So they sat in the cool veranda, for all the heat had gone out of the night, and only the scent of the *seringa* remained. A bright starry night now, Rigel and Betelgeux high in the heavens, and the chant of the grasshoppers rubbing their hind legs all around.

"Do you remember Ganesha Singh of your regiment?"

"Of course none better, he was a *duffedar* in Money's squadron when I joined the Doabas."

"Well, his son is a student in the university and got mixed up with this murder gang. A lot of students have been caught by this hysteria. There was Saunders' murder and then Mrs. Curtis and a lot down country, you know the mess hot-air has got us into. Well to-night we were raiding a wretched rag, *The Bright Star of the Punjab*, that is at the bottom of all the trouble in this university. The old man chanced to come and see me just as we were off and I took him too. Sure enough his boy was among 'em, also a Moslem lad, a son of an old Subahdar Mehtab Khan of the 4th P.I. I've got 'em both here. Don't want to run them in with the other scoundrels. D——n it man what tomfoolery this is. This good university here with all these fine lads has got the Bengal sedition poison running wildfire, for no reason whatever. We've warned everyone. Oh! It is not Irwin, he's a nice kind cove, but it was too big for him. It began in Chelmsford's time, Reading would not face facts, but Montague, he was the lad who sold us, and India. Started the show wrong. Upset all our friends. I've always wanted to bring this country on fast, but not in a way that it would run away from itself and us. You can't play games here. They don't matter in little lands like Ireland or Egypt. You know as well as I do how this country has been saved and helped, and how we are always teaching, helping, building, but always watching some wild devils. Always have, but we never expected some ass would let the intelligentsia go mad. Rotten lot too many of them, but these Punjabis are different. Well! No use talking to you . . . you know . . . but it is going to take us all our time to save the country from itself and these

clever fools. It was all going so well too. As for some in authority, hearts full of gold, brains full of feathers as that clever old Lady Dorothy said . . . There's heaps of good if it had not taken the wrong turn, and the mass of people are with us. Knowing we are working for and with them. Ah ! What's that !"

And well might he ask, there was a fiendish row from the stables. Yells and cries. *Whack ! Whack ! Whack !* They rushed down the steps Allanson thinking of attempts at a recuse of his prisoners. It was some way to go and when they got there, a *chaprassi* following with a lantern, there was a struggle in progress on the lawn, and some spectators at the side. The struggle had two groups. Two constables held two figures and it was from these that the sounds came. *Whack ! Whack ! Whack !* Sob, sob, sob !

Ganesha Singh was leathering his son, and the Inspector, his wife's sisters' husband's nephew. As they drew near, the head *chaprassi* came and told them. "Don't go near yet *sahib* ! Ressaldar-major *sahib gali nikalta*" and indeed he was "giving *gali*, scolding tongue."

"You'll join a Bengali murder gang will you ! You think the *Sirkar* is a bad *Sirkar* do you ! Who gave you three *marabbas* of *irrigated* land ? Who has brought the whole Punjab to wealth and prosperity, who treats me as I've never been treated before. Who saved your mother's life when she was ill. I'll teach you *B . . . te*, you worm, you, you swines' offspring, not my son." *Whack ! Whack ! Whack !*

A few yards off the police Inspector was at work hard, but less vociferously. All that could be heard between the sounds of the blows on the son of Mehtab Khan Ghukkar was a sibilant "*soor-neen, soor-neen*", which being interpreted is "swine face".

Earnleigh and the colonel watched a minute.

"They'll kill those lads! Here! Ganesha Singh. *Bus! Bus! Band karo!* . . . enough, enough, stop it at once."

The old man stayed his hand and kicked his victim, and the Inspector did the same.

"*Sahib*," said the old soldier, "I have just been *Samjhana*, making him understand. The *Khan Sahib* here has been doing the same to his *chacha*."

"I don't think either of them will give any *taklif* again." "*Eh Batcha, Bus hogya, Backshish bus khaliya?*"

"Have you eaten enough gratuity, enough *Bamblé Bakhskish* eh?"

The forms on the grass writhed, and one threw his arms round Earnleigh's ankles. But two angry relatives rested content on their stout bamboo sticks. By now half a dozen lanterns ringed the group.

Said the colonel, "That's the sort of stuff to give the troops. Knocked all the bombing out of the lads, but I hope no bones are broken. Tell you what I'll do. We'll drive the lot down to my camp, and get the regimental doctor to look at them, then it will all be quiet. Not bad looking lads, either." He was turning them over. "Here stand that Sikh boy up. A tall lad, a choice young man and a goodly when he's better. Here let me see that Mussulman lad. H . . . m rather slim."

The boys were still quietly sobbing, now and again a chest would heave and a sob come forth.

The policeman nodded. "Take one and lead on. Here, you old termagant. The *sahib* is taking the boys down to his doctor *sahib*."

"Take the boys with you and your adjutant Conachie. I'll bring the old man. Get up here you two. Wait while I tell the *mem-sahib*."

Indeed an anxious lady was shivering on the veranda,

"All right, my dear. Nothing serious, but I shan't be home for an hour or so so you and Alec go to bed, nothing to worry about. I'll tell you in the morning. It may all turn out admirably."

The Colonel and his adjutant were helping the bruised and rather helpless lads into their car.

"Here orderly, lift this boy in."

The colonel put his hand on the shoulder, that still heaved.

"There, there, *baba, durro mat abhi ilaj hojaega.*"

"There ! There ! my son, don't be frightened, you shall now be cured."

And the cars drove off, the two angry relatives sitting in silence beside the deputy commissioner.

#### BACK TO THE ARMY AGAIN

Down through old Anarkalli where Napier had his first cantonments, under the great blocks of houses in the ancient Moslem capital, out past the Jama Musjid and the domes like woman's breasts against the sky, under the old Mogul Palace Fortress, and the place where Runjhit Singh's widows went to their screaming end, rattled the cars, till they came to the line of sleeping tents, and as they slept the Ravi, full of melting snow, sucked at the deep sandbanks hard by.

Lights were out and all was quiet as the leading car drew up in front of the quarter-guard of the sleeping regiment and the adjutant answered the sentry's challenge. "*Hukamdur.*" (Who comes there).

"Call the *duffedar*, sentry !" and the N.C.O. comes out of the tent cramming on his pugaree. "Here, tell the *ressaldar-major* and the *wordi-major* to come to the Colonel's *Sahib's* tent. I'll call the doctor sir, I expect he has turned in."



"Help those lads out Mackintosh. Get them a blanket and let them squat."

The medical officer then arrived, a Sikh himself, and the two native officers. The Colonel explained the situation.

"These two boys have been properly walloped for their sins. We don't want to make a fuss about it, and what mischief they have been in is not our business."

The second car with Grayson now drew up, and Ganesha Singh got out, stiff and old and sad. When you have walloped your own son to a jelly and the fire of temper and righteous wrath dies out from three score years and ten, you are apt to be tired and worn.

The *Ressaldar-major*, Hukm Singh, a Dogra Rajput, had now arrived. When he saw Ganesha Singh, he bowed low to touch his knees. Had not he been a recruit when the old man was *wordi-major* (native adjutant.)

The Colonel said: "Hukm Singh, the son of Ganesha Singh, has been badly beaten, and the doctor *sahib* is looking to him. I want you to look after him for a day or two. Here you Ashraf Hussain, there is the son of Mehtab Khan of the 4th P.I. in the same plight. They live near you, look after that lad."

"Who has done this disgraceful thing *sahib*, surely the regiment will take vengeance for Ganesha Singh's son?"

"Well no, I don't think that will be easy, fact is they have been up to *badmashi*<sup>1</sup> and have caught it hot."

"Ah, well, *huzoor* the Doabas are a bit of a hard stuff too, and there eyes can wander when they're young. There's no need to ask whose dove-cots they have ruffled. The husbands must have had good bamboos. Had we not better enlist them. They come of good

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<sup>1</sup> *Badmashi* lit—evil living—mischief.

stock and no one will touch them here. They must be lads of spirit."

"Hear that Grayson. How does that strike you? Damn it, these seditions are giving me enough trouble trying to get at my men, without having some of these young hell-hounds in our midst. Why, in the villages they are even trying to persecute our men's families."

Ganesha Singh had followed a good deal. He knelt and kissed the Colonel's feet.

"*Sahib!* Save the boy and this young Moslem too, for two old men's sake. Did we not ride together at Chakdarra in Swat! *Sahib?*"

"We shall have to try. Here doctor man, are those boys injured?"

"They won't lie comfortable for a month, sir, but no bones broken."

The colonel and his adjutant walked up and down between the silent tents, only the snuffle of a horse at an empty hay net, gave any sign of life while those around stood waiting. It was a big thing taking young *fisad-wallahs*<sup>1</sup> into a regiment like the Doabas, or indeed any of his Majesty's Indian Corps to which the sedition-mongers were so anxious to turn into political machines like the old Sikh army and break the great tradition of cameraderie. But the stock was good, the lads had learnt their lesson, and Ganesha Singh had a claim.

"Can those boys stand, doctor . . . very well, bring them here."

The bruised and jellied lads shuffled along.

"Will you two boys behave yourselves if I take you into the ranks."

"*Sahib,*" said the Moslem. "*Hamara peth fissad se bargya*" . . . ("My stomach has had enough of rebellion.")

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<sup>1</sup> *Fisad*—rebellion.

The Sikh boy Basant Singh, put his hands to his head.

"Very well. Take 'em to the hospital tent. All right, Ganesha Singh, we'll see to them."

"We ain't the only one to take a *badmash*. What was it Kipling wrote Grayson?"

"Last night ye shot at a border thief,  
To-night 'tis a man of the Guides."

## CHAPTER XIV

# THE WAR STORY OF AN OUTCASTE SWEEPER

### BULDOO BADMASH—PLANTAGENET—THE BUBBLE REPUTATION

IN the account of the outcaste folk the untouchability of *Dom* and *Mhar* and *Chamar* has been explained. The following story of a sweeper thrice outcaste, who had been brought up in the outskirts of a *sahib's* house, is that of an incident during the World War, and showed how the spark of manliness stirred in the outcaste of a thousand years, and how he died in the trenches in a Rajput name. The time and place and the names and corps have been disguised, but that does not affect the pathos and the glory of the incident. It has also been treated so as to show some of the Indian colour.

### BULDOO BADMASH

*"Sweep a path and carpet it with red"*

The deodars waved in the autumn breeze of the Himalaya, and from the terraced flower-beds came now and again a shriek of delight, as a small head wearing a cardboard helmet and waving a toy sword scrambled among the dahlias and chrysanthemums, and a brown figure dodged before him from one deodar trunk to another.

On the veranda of the little hill bungalow was an array of lead soldiers, and a cannon or two, by the side of a grey card fort, but the commander of the fortress

had apparently sallied out against the dusky foe. In other words commandant-of-garrison Derek Walden was giving chase to leader-of-savages Buldoo the sweeper's urchin, the which was contrary to all household rules white or black, British or Indian.

If there was one rule of the household it was this. Derek was not to play with the sweeper's son, and the sweeper's son was not to come up from the terraces below where his father's hovel stood in solitude. But mother was out at bridge, and father was at the Viceroy's, and the establishment were all having a long siesta.

Derek was very partial to the sweeperlet Buldoo, and Buldoo had a penchant for the bungalow's vicinity where he worshipped with a deep worship the white-skinned red-cheeked, golden-haired Derek.

The illicit afternoon had begun with a full dress parade of dragoons and guardsmen on the verandah plinth, Buldoo's white teeth and pink lips showing his appreciation and adoration. Then had followed the sortie and merry chase in the woods. No solemn Karim Baksh to chase him away with a whip, and no shrill-voiced *ayah* to hurl abuse against him and all his relations. Derek was forbidden to play with any of the servants' children as a matter of order and sanitary precaution, but to play with the *mehtar's* son was not a matter of discipline, it was a matter of sheer anathema. And why? The answer in some sort is one with which the good British public has now a bowing and distinct acquaintance since the Gandhi Saga and the Knights of the Round Table. Something has been said already in this book of India's sixty million untouchables, of the 9,000 primary schools at which the children of the untouchables must sit outside and learn what they can therefrom.

Humblest and most untouchable of them all, almost outside the pale of any Easterns' human sympathy are

the sweepers and scavengers. It has been explained that precisely from what aboriginal or conquered origins or by what other means of social depression and slavery they have sprung, history and even tradition is silent. Tradition in fact would not condescend to such unmentionables. So they remain, a strange layer of humanity, living if not in service, on carrion and oddments, on lizards, and all the impure beasts of the jungle and sewer and the gutter.

But in the villages, in the cities and in the European households, they are in request as salaried menials. By that likeable habit of euphemy referred to which the East uses to cover its contempts, the sweeper is known by the title of *Mehtar* or prince, just as the humble, but not so humble water-carrier is called the *Bhistie*, the "man of paradise", and the gentle tailor "*the Khalifa*", or "successor" to the Prophet the Caliph.

The "Prince" therefore is a familiar presence at the gate of every *sahibs'* bungalow and outhouse, neatly attired with his broom of office, the long hand broom, so that the British speak of him as "Plantagenet", and the "Knight of the broom", and in a country where all conservancy is by hand, he is the most indispensable. Yet humble and outcaste though he be, he is little subject to the daily ills of the East compared with other servants, perhaps because he lives largely on a *réchauffé* of the succulent and nourishing scraps from the European's table, flung into his pathetic platter which he always places humbly outside the dining-room door.

This outcaste fraternity is a large one with many laws and customs within itself, and is at times ministered to in such aping of religion as may be permitted to it, by outcaste renegade priests of higher orders, in fact it is a life of which the curious might deduce a strange story where many of the earliest rites of primitive races have a queer and syncopated survival.

Of such then was little Buldoo brown and merry imp, of sturdy well moulded limbs grown on soup and stew from the swill tub of the big house and the better therefore, lively as grig and happy as the day was long, with little thought for the strange mould of life into which his body and soul had been poured. Thrice glad was he when the rules could be broken and he could romp and play soldiers with the other little grig of the white skin and the golden hair, who he usually had to worship afar.

Just as the *chasse-aux-chrysanthemums* were in full swing, the gardener appeared in fury, and the head servant Karim Baksh arrived from his siesta, hurriedly putting his pugaree straight and gripping his master's hunting crop. Buldoo was going to be chased home and Derek was to be captured and got ready for tea with the *mem-sahib*. The day's fun was over, and before long Derek *Sahib*, the *chota sahib* or young master, who reigned in all hearts, but especially in those of Indra Singh the mate of the rickshaw-crew and four stout Garhwali lads, was switched off to the mysterious *Willayat* where golden-haired lads are turned into young masters and return to be met enthusiastically by old masters old retainers.

The Garhwali crew were not forbidden as associates, being men of Rajput origin themselves and often formed squads for Derek to drill, and actually paraded in line to salute him in the little hill railway train, as he went to *Willayat*. But before he went he managed to convey to Buldoo, his old sword and a box of rather broken life-guardsmen, to be buried and much treasured.

#### PLANTAGENET

So the *chota sahib*, the golden-haired Derek, passed away to the mysterious *Willayat* and school, and

Buldoo's parents sought a new master, while the brown little imp who was darkening and blackening as he grew, cherished the life-guardsmen, but broke and lost his sword.

As time rolled on he too became a "knight of the broom", and because he remembered his memory of his father's soldier masters became sweeper in the lines of an Indian regiment, *Halakhor* sweeper, or night-soil removalist. It was not an inspiring role, but Buldoo was now a well shaped lad, who walked, for all the broom on his arm, with an athlete's tread, and wrestled with other sweeper lads in the dust or the mud outside the regimental lines. Sometimes as sweepers must, he dimly reflected on the why and the wherefore, and sometimes on a memory of the golden lad with whom he had romped and shrieked when authority was napping, and he spent many a spare hour watching the recruit soldiers drill, and swept the ground in front of the quarter-guard with meticulous care.

He had a friend among sweepers, a lad who swept in the barracks of the British battalion in the same cantonment, and the friend had said to him "Why do you stay among those black soldiers, come with me and serve the white men. There is heaps of their food about, and they give you tobacco, and life is jolly."

So Buldoo who knew well enough that not for one instant in the lines of the Indian Regiment could he overstep the ruthless hardfast line below which the outcaste lived, agreed that he too would go and see life with the *gora log*, the "white-folk". Like all sweepers, *meghs* and other outcastes he knew his landmarks well enough, and what horrible penalties came in the night to those who dared presume. He had accepted it without thought, but the vision of the ways of the British soldier who understood not and cared little for such things was entrancing. To the barracks he went



after having paid one rupee earnest money and licence to the *jemadar* sweeper, and was duly produced before the quartermaster of the regiment and entertained as "barrack-sweeper. No. 50".

Life in the sweepers' lines, better tenements than with the Rajput regiment he had just left, was good enough. He had a gorgeous green waistcoat which his friend lent him and a green pink pugaree tied in outrageous jaunting fashion, when he went down to the bazaar on an off day, so much so that the little gipsy girls who came to town with their gaudy skirts, and neatly bound bosoms, thought him a very fine lad indeed. Buldoo's heart was drawn to the barrack children who reminded him of the *chota sahib*, and for them he would bring paper toys from the bazaar, and clay horses at the Dewali, and let off fireworks, and so he became a licensed player in the Parcherries and the wives of the regiment gave him food and oddments and knew him as "Banshoot" a term of endearment in use in the East.

Buldoo was no fool in the state of life to which he had been called, and he studied life around him. The ways of the Rajput soldiery who curled their beards and moustaches and cursed him if he came too near, he had followed acutely, learning how they cooked their food apart and how they muttered *mantras* and charms on occasion. He even had copied their swaggering lilt, which he would use when he went to the bazaar, and once a gipsy girl had called to "*Aye Sipahi*," "Oh! soldier," and indeed when he stripped to wrestle with the other lads of the broom, his lithe frame was as good as any young Rajputs', and save for a coarse joint of nostril to face, was almost Aryan of countenance. If you knew that he was a sweeper and could never escape that lot and fate in India, you would sigh, for one who seemed built by nature for a fair race in life, and

perhaps wonder at the hard ways of the world, especially the Eastern world.

Once after he had left the Rajput lines, swaggering off to the bazaar and to see if the girl who had called him *Sipahi* was about, he ran into a soldier of the Indian Regiment who recognized him. Buldoo cringed and salaamed.

"Oho *Bhangi*! who told you to tie your pugaree like a Rajput, hey?"

Buldoo looked round, cringed again, joined his hands and held them up to the twice-born in respect, supplication and humiliation.

"Look at your waistcoat," cried the soldier, "And your pjyamas, they are tighter than a courtesan's and look like a soldier's. I'll teach you, you swine, you dog-eater, I'll teach you to ape your betters," and he knocked his pugaree off.

For a moment Buldoo saw red, and made as if to fly at his reviler. Then the ancient fear came on and he could only grovel. The Rajput felt better.

"Don't let me catch you doing it again *Bhangi*, or I'll hammer the life out of you," and off he swaggered.

Buldoo sat by the side of the road, and after a while recovered himself. Perhaps some spark of the ancient race before the Aryan dominion came to him. He got up, dusted himself, picked up his pugaree, tied it meticulously and as if in derision, tied it with the Rajput tilt and knot, and then set off, but not in the same direction. He made his way back to barracks. On the steps of the wall near No. 1 block a soldier who he knew was sitting cleaning his rifle.

Buldoo salaamed.

"'Ullo Jerry where you been, a larking down in that bazaar, 'ere just 'old this," and he gave Buldoo the butt of his rifle while he hauled a tight pull-through up the barrel.

When this was over Buldoo stood to attention, shouldered the rifle at the short shoulder and brought his hand over in salute.

"No," said his friend, "that ain't right. See here !"

He took the rifle and showed the sweeper the proper way. Then he thought it would amuse him to try and put him through the manual. For an hour Buldoo eagerly learnt, and that was the beginning of a friendship between Buldoo line-sweeper to his Majesty's ...th, and Private Albert Jenks, formerly municipal sweeper in Stepney. Because Jenks was a soldier at heart he liked a pupil and Buldoo became expert at handling his rifle and was even taken down to the miniature range and was allowed to fire a round on pretence of cleansing the marker's butt. At last came a day when he was allowed to fire some service rounds coached by Jenks, and used after the musketry party had gone back to barracks on the real range beyond the golf links.

Thus ex-sweeper Jenks of Stepney, gamecock and full fledged foot-soldier and sweeper Buldoo of Bhangi Lane Ambala, hereditary poltroon and outcaste became sworn friends. Little recked Jenks of hereditary untouchability, and exploited the friendship for all it was worth. Fortunately Jenks had no fancy for the country liquor that has often been the bane of the British rank and file, but a skirt was another matter and Buldoo would introduce his friends of the gipsy and criminal tribes to Jenks. The soldier was not perhaps the worse for a chat out in the thorn thickets with some of these saucy wenches in the yellow and red petticoats and their jinky silver bangles, disreputable baggages though they were with their rounded arms and busts and glorious white teeth.

But the best of days came to an end, and one day came the tidings of the great war over-the-seas. Jenks was now all a soldier, and talked by the hour together of

what the British Army would do. Buldoo and the yellow skirts listened all agog, and news came that battalion after battalion, European and Indian were off to *Willayat*. But Jenks' corps was excluded and then one day came an order too, that sent it off to some destination overseas unknown. The number of sweepers to go with the corps was much reduced and Buldoo to his dismay was left behind, and taken on by the Barrack Department to keep the barracks swept and garnished. It was not very long before new Europeans came from Europe, so new and so green and so polite, much more so than the regular British soldier. Buldoo soon found himself installed as guide, philosopher, and friend to many of the newcomers to whom he would show the bazaars and the country round, and talk the English that he had picked up from Jerry. Many were the little tips that came his way, but his heart would not rest in peace and plenty. The war was calling him, and as he could not get discharged he made off and walked the countryside to another station a hundred miles away.

Here was a great recruiting depot for Indian troops, and for a while he had ideas of shipping as a soldier, as the bazaars said that the *sahibs* were enlisting all and sundry. So he swaggered up one day with the Rajput knot in his pugaree to offer himself for enlistment. The sight of the high caste soldiery, Rajput and Moslem however, was too much for him, and his heart went down to his boots, and he slunk into a latrine to re-tie his pugaree and look like a sweeper again. Not for him the bubble reputation though he did understand a Mark V Service Rifle and all its ways.

Once, however, he took a Moslem sepoy's rifle on sentry-go for an hour, for half a rupee, swearing in the dark that he was a Moslem too, and a reservist, putting on a great coat and tying his pugaree accordingly. He even in the dark had the courage to challenge someone

who had approached his post, in the way that Jenks had taught him. It was only another sweeper and nothing to swagger about, but it amused him to treat his brother knight in a lofty manner. That was the sum of his military experience, and the memory of the *chota sahib* and "*Shabash Buldoo*" in a piping voice made his heart ache to be a true and proper soldier and not an outcaste sweeper.

#### THE BUBBLE REPUTATION

##### *"En avant les enfants perdus"*

Then one day came to Buldoo, the first step on a military adventure. Someone said in the bazaar that the *Sirkar* was enlisting sweepers for Mesopotamia. Buldoo had heard vague stories of the War in the holy places of Islam. It was there that he would go, and before long he found himself with a numbered tin disc on a cord round his neck, on the great Black Water, the *Kala Pani*, on his way up the Persian Gulf to the Shatt El Arab, and the town of Bussorah which men now call Basra. Indeed was it a strange place for a little outcaste lad to find himself, and so Buldoo thought in a misty way. But sleeping was dry and food was there in plenty as too many folk could not eat their rations while hearty Buldoo could, and one day as he wandered about the ship, who should he find on the British soldiers' deck but his old friend Jenks, wounded on the first advance to Kut, and now on his way back to the force on the Tigris. It was a happy re-union, and before long Jenks had Buldoo at the manual again.

"Yer never know Jerry in this blooming country when yer wont 'ave to fight for yer life with them thieving *Harabs* all over the shop."

Many a yarn did the wide-eyed Buldoo listen to and then the great steamer came to the bar at the river's

mouth and everyone was bundled out into a ferry boat, for the larger transports could not cross the bar. For twelve hours did the crowded ferry boats steam up the muddy waters of the Shatt through groves of green palm trees, and presently the palms were hung with festoons of grapes, and everyone felt that Mesopotamia did not look too bad. What a sight met their eyes as they entered the crowded river and port of Basra, great ocean steamers everywhere unloading, river steamers and barges empty and full, coming downstream and starting up, such a sight as Sinbad the Sailor never dreamed of for his ancestral Bussorah.

Soon the steamer warped in along side, and Buldoo and all the drafts were hurried off and collected on the newly made quays . . . quays which a few months earlier were swamps and irrigated date gardens. The drafts had little time to think or look around them. All that Buldoo was aware of that a ship near by was being unloaded by a host of tall black men who were struck by the overseers every time they passed like ants with a hayseed. And somebody said that they came from Misr or Misraim, and that the Pharaohs of old had always whacked them and that they liked it like that. But Buldoo noticed that the *sahibs* whacked too, but the whack fell on the grain-sack.

Not far from the port was the "followers" depot, where all the non-combatant men were posted, most of them the menials for the service of the troops, sweepers, *bhisties*, and also hosts of cooks, these latter men of better class. Cheery hearty discipline prevailed in the camp, and those who did not know the trade they professed were soon taught it. Very thorough was the commandant of the depot. Many men had come out as cooks who knew nothing except how to prepare their own meals, and Buldoo watched them taught mass cooking, and how to use oil cookers. In a country where there

was no wood but plenty of oil, oil cooking was wise, even he understood that. What pleased him most was to see the final lessons, when the men were made to cook in trenches representing the front line under the fire of bursting bombs. He laughed to see the cooks cower and scuttle and then get used to it. One day he went for temporary duty as extra sweeper to the British Base Hospital, and here his Umbala experience stood him in stead. All the *gora log*, the white soldiers were his friends, and he heard many tales of real fighting, in which his friends had invariably bayoneted Turks, Buldoo felt he should like to do that especially if as one of his friends said, it was a matter of "prodding them in the rump".

There was lots doing up at the front, some hundreds of miles off, and soon Buldoo found himself on a barge, one of two on each side of a steamer chunking up the river, lying lazy listening to the chant of the chainmen. It was fun too for they passed great Arab boatmen towing their sailing boats when the wind was against them. They stowed starko, which shocked the Indian soldiers on board, who pelted them with potatoes, and Buldoo also laughed at this, but the Arabs who like potatoes laughed too.

At one place where the steamer stopped, was an outpost work protecting the narrows, and there Buldoo saw a Garhwali who he was sure he knew. It was Indra Singh, one of the crew of the *rickshaw* of the *chota sahib's* mother at Simla long ago. He salaamed low and asked him, and said how he was the sweeper's son, and did Indra Singh remember, and where was the *chota sahib*.

Indra Singh was graciously pleased to take notice and say he did remember the sweeper's *badmash* son. Buldoo grinned. He too was looking for the *chota sahib*, he had heard he was up river, but many *chota*

*sahibs* had been killed. But he, Indra Singh, too longed to see that *chota sahib* for whom he had a very loving memory, and Buldoo salaamed and passed on.

That night the steamer pulled up by the bank for the night, not far from Amara. There was nowhere to go, marsh was all round, and the men were allowed to stroll on the bank. Just as it was dusk, Buldoo came on a prostrate sepoy, weeping quietly. He was but a lad and said he had *bukhar* "fever". Buldoo massaged his aching knees and shin-bones. "He could not go on," said the lad "he wanted to go back. He had not wanted to enlist, his father had made him." His father was a wounded soldier and loved the *Sirkar* and the King, but he Buldeo Singh was going to desert. He was not going to the front to be bayoneted by Turks, his mother would not want that.

A sudden brainwave came to Buldoo. Why should not he, Buldoo, go to the front as Buldeo Singh Rajput, and take over this lad's equipment. No one would know. He could tie a Rajput pugaree. He knew how Rajputs eat. The draft was under a strange Indian officer. He could handle a rifle and fire a cartridge. It did not take long to make the exchange, to change the discs on each other's necks, to put Buldeo Singh into the comfortable loose followers jacket, and for Buldoo to put on the Rajput uniform. The lad was to go back as a cook sick with fever, and as a steamer with empty barges going down was moored hard by, Buldoo put his dummy on that, giving him his own bedding roll, and taking on the sepoy's. It did not take long and the newly made Rajput went and slept an exciting sleep among his fellows and even dreamed of prodding, of bayoneting Turks in the rump. No one had told him that that was not the way of the Turk, who liked the prod to be the other way about.

Next morning all was well. No one noticed him



and with the others he took his rifle from the twisted ropestand in the middle of the barge and cleaned it, and that was all he had to do. Being used to cleaning the belts of the European soldiers at Umbala he soon had his equipment in admirable order. Once an officer called him, and asked his name. With mingled trepidation and pride he had said "*Buldeo Singh Huzoor.*" His whiskers and beard were growing, and these he curled carefully, and it would have taken a very penetrating eye to pierce his disguise.

The steamer had chunked up against the stream past Amara and its rattling traffic, and past the Shrine-of-Ali-in-the-East, and by nightfall had reached the Shrine-of-Ali-in-the-West. Here they were getting near the front and steamers and barges crowded with wounded passed them, and stories of fierce doings were shouted at them. The British officers on board were parading the details, and chatting encouragingly and down the wind came the boom of distant guns.

That night they tied up at Sheikh Saad, and next morning ran up a few miles further where the drafts were disembarked, the followers being ordered back to Sheikh Saad, now becoming the advanced base of the force.

There had been desperate fighting, and ahead lay the beleaguered Kut. Buldoo found himself fallen in on the bank, with 25 other men of his Rajput corps, and ordered to ground arms, and help drag off some guns. Hauling on a rope came easily and he exerted himself manfully, earning approval. It was a whirl of excitement, with the blue Persian mountains in the distance, and the now near sound of guns and musketry. His battalion was in the trenches facing the Turks, and shouldering their bedding rolls the party marched off. It was not more than a mile's trudge before the party came up to the regimental headquarters. Already Buldoo had seen

the *chota sahib*, and just as he was going to speak to him two other *chota sahibs* came up just like him, and Buldoo was confused. Perhaps it wasn't his *chota sahib* after all.

The new-found soldier was to get his dose at once. He was sent up with a *havildar* and ten others to join a company in the front line trenches, and the Turks were shelling indiscriminately. A *sahib* was in command just like the other three he had seen, and the new draft were interviewed and their equipment inspected. The *sahib* spoke kindly to Buldoo and asked him about service and his home. Buldoo had flushed with pleasure, in giving his concocted answers, flushed with pride that he was a sepoy and being treated as such. That night the Turks had attacked, and Buldoo had actually shot a man, and had not been seized with fear. His heart exulted as he repeated to himself, "I am a *jangi nafar*,"—"a fighting man." The corporal by his side had been shot and he, outcaste Buldoo it was, who had gripped the situation, and had given orders to the squad. The *sahib* had said *shabash*<sup>1</sup>, and some distant strain in his blood re-echoed to the phrase.

The commanding officer had come into the trenches, and remarked that Buldoo was a proper enough lad, a *baraba jowan*, and again his heart leapt. He had eaten his food and prepared it like a Rajput. He had dared give water and hand a *chappatti* to a comrade and felt that his bluff held good. That night came orders that if the Turk attacked, and was driven back he was to be followed in to his own trenches.

The day had passed quietly enough. Buldoo had slept and eaten most of the day. The men were chaffing and talking quietly, and he had actually gained approval by telling a ribald yarn from Bombay. To his surprise he seemed talking on equal terms, and no one had seemed

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<sup>1</sup> Well-done ! Lit (Persian) "Be a King !"

to look askance. That night just after the moon had gone down over the marshes towards Babylon, a heavy fire of Turkish artillery had broken out. So heavy that the men were disconcerted. The *sahib* and the *subahdar* had been down the line heartening them when the men on the parapet commenced to fire. Nothing happened, however, but there had been several casualties. Buldoo found himself acting lance-*naik*, and later, told off as the company commander's orderly. That officer himself, was but a lad just one of those *chota sahibs* who seemed to Buldoo so much alike.

The Turkish Artillery grew silent, the rifle-fire stopped as the Rajputs recovered their nerve. The Company Commander walked along the front-line, with Buldoo lance-*naik* and orderly behind him. He had had time to re-tie his pugaree and give it the most rakish of Rajput twists, with an end sticking out stiff like a plume, and the officer noticed it with approval against the sky-line as they climbed out of a deep trench.

The night was bright and clear with a cool wind off the Pusht-i-Koh. Now and again the sky showed bright as one of the bigger guns fired a round, and as the echo died away, Rigel twinkled to Betelgeux in the clear Chaldæan night, as it had twinkled to the ancient astronomers, even when Amraphael was king of Babylon and Tidal King of Nations, or chief of tribes, in that same Pusht-i-Koh across the way.

Suddenly from out the shadow in front of the parapet came a rush, and a whirl and a burst of bombs. The Turks were on top of the Rajputs ere half the men could spring up again to the firing step. Crash among them burst the bombs and behind the bombers came the rush of fixed bayonets. Clear on the sky-line stood *Nafar Mustapha*, hurling projectiles right and left while the men with bayonets opened magazine fire. Half the Rajputs were down and the front line trench was lost.

But "counter attack at once" was a good rule and the company-commander brought out his two reserve platoons. Old *Subahdar-major* Nihal Singh came forth roaring and the *sahib* by his side. "*Shabash the King's Own.*" "*Shabash Rajput log! Maro! Maro! Soor neen.*"<sup>1</sup>

With levelled bayonets and confused throwing of bombs the Rajputs rushed forth against the Turks who had not time to consolidate and hurled them back once again. Nihal Singh crashed to the ground, and as he sprang forward behind the gallant old tyke, the *sahib* too fell with a bullet in the leg. It was Buldoo then who rushed forward shouting "*Shabash Rajput Log! Maro! Maro! Shabash!*"

The trench was re-taken, but alas the race is not always to the swift. As Buldoo sprang to the top of the parapet to hurl a bomb at the retreating Turk he too must fall, with a bullet hole in his forehead, and the back blown out of his head. And just before grim Sergeant Death had called to ex-sweeper Buldoo "Pile your arms! Pile your arms!" a cry had reached him from the wounded *chota sahib*, a well remembered cry from the Simla pine, "*Oh Shabash, Buldeo! Shabash!*"

"I am calling them home—Come Home! Come Home,  
Tread light o'er the dead in the valley."

—*The Trumpeter.*

THE END

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<sup>1</sup>"Well done. Shoot! Shoot! ah! Swineface!"



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